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T.REX
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MOJO

Music Magazine

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CARGO RECORDS

PERE UBU
NUKE THE WHALES 2006-2014
THE CREATIVE MOMENT IS A HIDDEN PLACE. IT IS THE EYE OF A HURRICANE ENCIRCLED BY THE RIPPING WINDS OF THE HUMAN CONDITION. THE PARADIGM DEFIES ANALYSIS. LANGUAGE IS ILL-SUITED. LIKEWISE, A BAND IS A MYSTERY ON DISPLAY WITH THE HOI POLLOI. IN EITHER CASE, THE SELF-PROCLAIMED AUTHORITY IS NOT AN IMPARTIAL OBSERVER STANDING ASTRIDE THE CHAOS. HIS OWN DESIRE TO BE RECOGNIZED AS AN AUTHORITY ENCOURAGES HIM TO COLLECT GOSSIP, RELY ON THE DELUSIONS OF THE OPPORTUNISTIC, AND TO IDENTIFY AND REVEAL CONTROVERSY THAT ONLY HIS OWN UNIQUE DILIGENCE HAS MADE HIM PRIVY TO. HE IS EVER EAGER FOR A SENSATIONAL INTERPRETATION OF THE INCONSEQUENTIAL AND MUNDANE OR, CONVERSELY, TO DEPRECATE THE EXTRAORDINARY INTO THE MERE ORDINARY.

PERE UBU

NUKE THE WHALES 2006-2014

FIRE RECORDS 4 LP BOX SET

Featuring the first vinyl release for 'Why I LUV Women' alongside 'Long Live Père Ubu!', their exceptional Fire debut 'Lady From Shanghai' and 'Carnival Of Souls'. "Few bands display such dedication to constant self-reinvention as Pere Ubu" The Quietus

50 FOOT WAVE

BLACK PEARL

FIRE RECORDS LP / CD

50 Foot Wave, Throwing Muses' Kristin Hersh's other project, return with a sonic trip of heavy, echoey riffs and spidery guitars that dissolve into motorik bass and drums. "A power trio that gives the poetic and stylistically voracious Hersh space to bare her teeth." NPR

FU MANCHU

FU30, PT. 2

AT THE DOJO 10"

Second instalment in Fu Manchu's 30th Anniversary vinyl 10" series, Fu30, Pt.2, includes 2 new original Fu Manchu songs + a cover of Surf Punks' "My Wave." 45 RPM for maximum heaviness. 10" on Neon Pink Vinyl

MWWB

THE HARVEST

NEW HEAVY SOUNDS LP / CD

Black Sabbath meets My Bloody Valentine. Fuzzed up heavy metal collides with the dreampop of Lush and Slowdive. Welcome to the unique world of MWWB.

CROWS
BEWARE BELIEVERS

CROWS

BEWARE BELIEVERS

BAD VIBRATIONS RECORDS / FUZZ CLUB LP / CD

Crows return with second album Beware Believers. Equal parts ferocious and hedonistic, the LP deals in a dark, visceral post-punk that's been hardened by years of notoriously rowdy live shows.

BDRMM

PORT EP

SONIC CATHEDRAL LP / CD

New EP featuring their acclaimed recent single 'Port', alongside remixes by Daniel Avery, Working Men's Club, A Place To Bury Strangers and more. Vinyl out in August, CD in April.

Papé NZIENGUI

PAPÉ NZIENGUI ET SON GROUPE

KADI YOMBO

AWESOME TAPES FROM AFRICA LP / CD

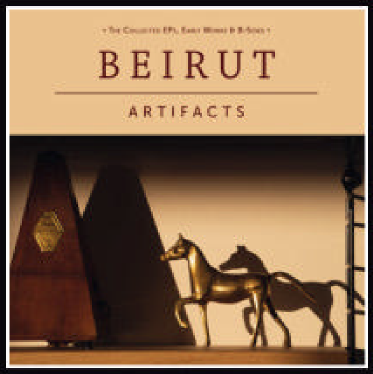
Long out-of-print & much sought after "Kadi Yombo" is the most successful album in the quest for a fusion between tradition & modernity in Bwiti harp music of the Tsogho people of Gabon.

TOM ROGERSON

RETREAT TO BLISS

WESTERN VINYL LP / CD

Tom Rogerson's collaboration with Brian Eno was both "wonderous" (Pitchfork) and "Elegant" (Mojo). Using piano, subtle electronics, and Rogerson's voice, his debut solo album is both profound and intensely personal.


BEIRUT
ARTIFACTS

BEIRUT

ARTIFACTS

POMPEII RECORDS 2LP / 2CD

Artifacts collects the very best of Beirut, from early demos, B-sides & rarities, and traces the evolution of a 14 year old Zach Condon's first attempts at bringing to life the music he heard in his mind, to the fully formed Beirut we know today.

BARRIE
Barbara

BARRIE

BARBARA

WINSPEAR LP / CD

On her new album Barbara, Barrie creates a beautifully peculiar and quietly ambitious collection of synth-pop, indie rock, and folk songs that reflect a new willingness to let listeners into her world.

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ELECTRICITY

MERGE RECORDS LP / CD

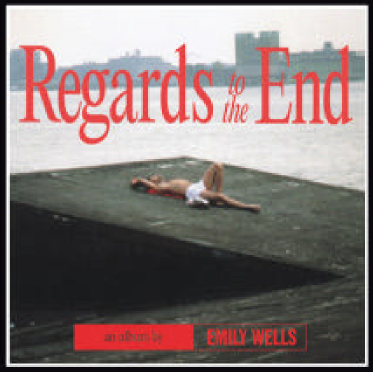
PRODUCED BY HOT CHIP "irresistible, multidimensional anthems that reach far beyond the borders of geography, music and emotion." —NPR

EL TEN ELEVEN

NEW YEAR'S EVE

JOYFUL NOISE RECORDINGS LP / CD

With their latest album New Year's Eve, Kristian Dunn and Tim Fogarty romp through infectious grooves, Rototom blasts, electrifying breakdowns, and meditative reprieves in this joyous new chapter.


Regards to the End
EMILY WELLS

EMILY WELLS

REGARDS TO THE END

THIS IS MERU LP / CD

Regards to the End is the radically empathetic 6th album from visionary artist and composer Emily Wells, and finds connection with the lives and work of choreographers and visual artists tied to the LGBTQ+ community and AIDS crisis.

Duct Tape
& Shivering Crows

THESE ARMS ARE SNAKES

DUCT TAPE & SHIVERING CROWS

SUICIDE SQUEEZE LP / CD

Taken as an overview of These Arms Are Snakes' career, Duct Tape & Shivering Crows is an exhilarating study of the band's sonic evolution, varied musical approaches, and consistent quality.

REUBEN'S MAMI
DAUGHTERS WATA

REUBEN'S DAUGHTERS

MAMI WATA

MICROCULTURES RECORDS LP / CD

Playful and adventurous pop where solid grooves undulate underneath technicolor island slide guitars. Who knew some of the sunniest new music in the world could be crafted in the southwest of England? Kelley Stoltz.

DISASSEMBLER
A WAVE FROM A SHORE

DISASSEMBLER

A WAVE FROM A SHORE

WESTERN VINYL LP / CD

Via tape loops & synth vignettes, Christopher Royal King & Christopher Tignor of This Will Destroy You join forces under the name Disassembler for a richly timbral, emotionally gripping work of outboard-ambient spontaneity.

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40 VASHTI BUNYAN Mangled by the '60s pop machine, she set out on a quest in a horse-drawn wagon, and found the songs that made up her masterpiece. Now she's written a book about it.

46 MUDHONEY How four goofballs invented 'grunge'. Eyewitnesses retrace the beer-sodden path to *Superfuzz Bigmuff*: "It was all about getting stuff down to its essence."

50 TALK TALK A deep dive into *Spirit Of Eden*, the enigmatic *tour de force* that atomised one of the '80s' most cultish bands, from a compelling new book by Ben Wardle.

58 T. REX Fifty years ago, Britain hit Peak Bolan – although doubt was already gnawing at the Bopping Elf: "He was a tough kid, but he had all this spirituality…"

66 PORCUPINE TREE Steven Wilson's revered neo-quasi-prog project reconvenes, but for how long no one can – or will – say: "You might want to see us now while you can."

COVER STORY

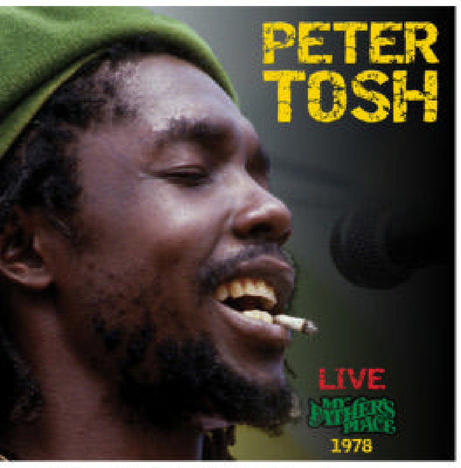
70 JACK WHITE Jack's back, with two albums, blue hair and an – as ever – unique methodology. How starving himself, staring at the sun, and buying Prince albums for 50 grand played a part in a blazing comeback. "I enjoy extreme circumstances," he tells Grayson Haver Currin.

> "I've always been honest with people. Possibly that's why it became so big."
> **MARC BOLAN, 1972, P58**

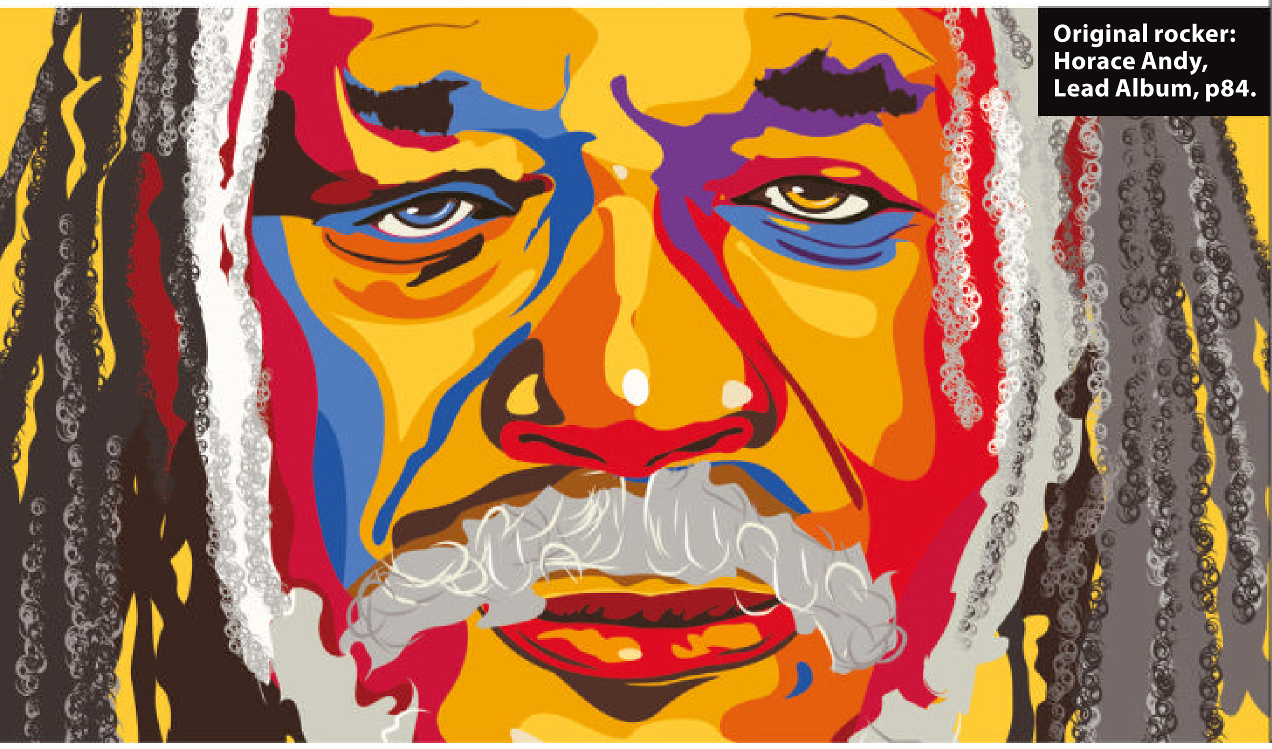
Getty

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
COMPUTERWORLD

Computer love: Kraftwerk get remixed, p95.



Stevie Wonder-approved Sarah Brown, Rising, p25.



Original rocker: Horace Andy, Lead Album, p84.

MOJO

REGULARS

9 ALL BACK TO MY PLACE Jimmy Webb, Kathy Valentine and The Weather Station's Tamara Lindeman spin the platters.

112 REAL GONE Norma Waterson, Betty Davis, Gary Brooker, Ian McDonald, Sandy Nelson and many more, sorry you had to go.

120 ASK MOJO Who pulled off the most devilish musical hoaxes?

122 HELLO GOODBYE They had instant success, but even the righteous sounds couldn't prevent dissolution. John McLaughlin recalls Mahavishnu Orchestra's ups and downs.

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14 MARK LANEGAN Insuperable voice, master collaborator, memoirist and solo witness Mark Lanegan tragically left us last month. MOJO remembers a unique talent.

16 TAJ MAHAL AND RY COODER Back when the blues were crossing over, two bandmates bowed down to Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee. Now, almost 60 years on, Taj and Ry take their places and pay tribute with new team-up album *Get On Board*.

18 SIGUR RÓS They haven't released an LP since 2013 and weren't intending to. But now Iceland's masters of elemental post-rock have a new album in preparation – so how did they get here? An in-studio report finds out.

22 LES RALLIZES DÉNUDÉS Could a band be any more mythic than Japan's Les Rallizes Dénudés, a group so intent on not selling out they only managed a handful of releases since forming in 1967? Now there's new official activity, but what's really going on?

23 KEITH RICHARDS Over all the records, all the years and all the long, long nights, what record really changed Keef's life? You'll have to read on to find out. Plus! What the Stones are planning next.

MOJO FILTER

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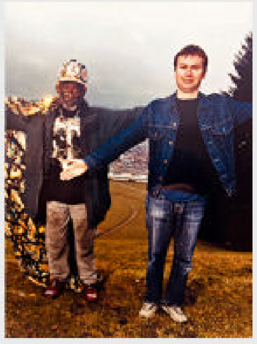
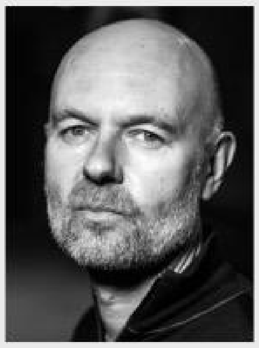


Simon McEwen

MOJO Production Editor Simon's first ever foreign trip was for sister mag MOJO Collections in 2002, interviewing Lee 'Scratch' Perry in the reggae maverick's Secret Laboratory near Zürich. It was the highlight of a life-long affair with Jamaican music. This month he reviews Horace Andy's new album on page 84.

Andy Cowan

Long before he became MOJO's jazz columnist, Andy edited rap monthly Hip-Hop Connection, where he witnessed Cypress Hill's rise from underground chancers to rap superstars at close quarters. He tells their tale on page 34. Away from music, his hands are full juggling super fluffy animals (see Klaus, pictured).



Ben Wardle

Before embarking on Mark Hollis's biography (extracted from page 50), Ben had warmed up with books including The Art Of The LP and a novel based on Wire's *Pink Flag*. In a previous life he was an A&R person, cheering on acts such as Sleeper, The Wannadies, Aimee Mann, Stephen Duffy and Lethal Bizzle.

Peter Boettcher, Andrew Cotterill, Maria Papaefstathiou

FranZ
Ferdinand
HITS
TO THE
HEAD

THE GREATEST HITS

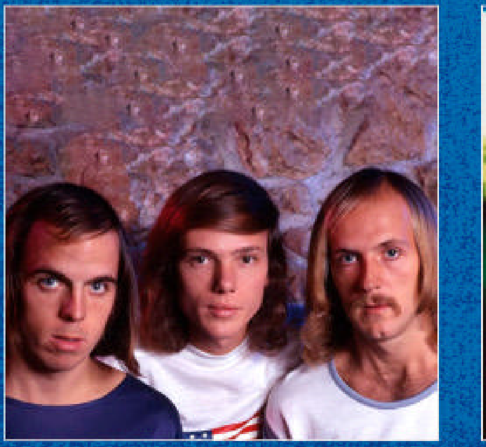
including TAKE ME OUT, DO YOU WANT TO,
NO YOU GIRLS and more

OUT NOW Domino

HELLO OPERATOR!

THE SONGS JACK WHITE TAUGHT US

Jack White III



1 THE WEST COAST POP ART EXPERIMENTAL BAND

A CHILD OF A FEW HOURS IS BURNING TO DEATH

To begin, an ultra-wired psych nugget from late '60s Los Angeles. Jack White fronted The Dead Weather for a pretty faithful take in 2009; find it on the flipside of I Cut Like A Buffalo.

Written by B Markley, R. Morgan. Published by Rhombus Music/Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Co. (BMI) ℗&© 1967 WEA International Inc Licensed courtesy of Warner Music UK Ltd.

2 HELLO=FIRE

PARALLEL

White has often covered songs by his collaborators over the years, and Hello=Fire turns out to be the solo project of his Dead Weather/Raconteurs bandmate, Dean Fertita. Brendan Benson also helps out on this synthy powerpop track from 2009, reinvented by White as country-pomp for the B-side of Would You Fight For My Love?.

Written by Dean Fertita, Brendan Benson. Published by Kobalt Music Group ℗&© 2009 Schnitzel Records Ltd. From *Hello=Fire*. www.schnitzel.co.uk

3 SON HOUSE

DEATH LETTER BLUES

Among the vintage blues radically reupholstered by the early White Stripes, few stood out as strikingly as Death Letter Blues: a frenzied, virtuosic highlight of many Stripes gigs, as well as their second album, 2000's *De Stijl*. House worked as a railway porter before his rediscovery in the 1960s, and Death Letter drew on one of his earliest songs, My Black Mama Part 2, that he recorded for Paramount in 1930.

Written by Son House. COPYRIGHT CONTROL

4 BLIND WILLIE JOHNSON

JESUS IS COMING SOON

A relative newcomer to the repertoire, White covered Johnson's 1928 gospel blues, written in response to the last flu pandemic, in his October 2020 Saturday Night Live performance. As detailed in this month's cover story, White folded Jesus Is Coming Soon into a medley which also included Ball & Biscuit and his Beyoncé collaboration, Don't Hurt Yourself.

Written by W Johnson. COPYRIGHT CONTROL

9 PUBLIC NUISANCE

SMALL FACES

If Otis's song ranks as one of the most famous tracks covered by the Stripes, here's one of the most obscure. Public Nuisance were gnarly psych-punks from California who only released one single in their '60s lifetime. Small Faces comes from their lost album, shelved by producer Terry Melcher after the Manson murders and only released in 2002.

Written by Houston. Published by Universal Music Publishing International Ltd ℗&© 2002 Frantic Records. From *Gotta Survive* (Frantic Records). www.publicnuisance.net

10 PENTAGRAM

FOREVER MY QUEEN

No surprise that White's engagement with metal involves a cratedigger zeal and his heaviest project, The Dead Weather. Forever My Queen was recorded by Virginian doom pioneers Pentagram in 1973, but unreleased 'til 2001. A standby of Dead Weather gigs, a version surfaced on 2009's *Live At Third Man Records West*.

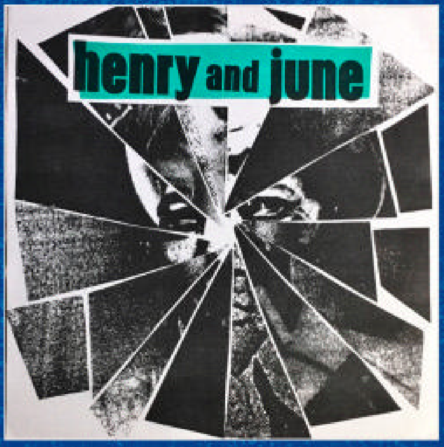
Written by Liebling. Published by Release Relapse Music (BMI), ℗&© 2001 Relapse Records, Inc. From *First Daze Here: The Vintage Collection* (Relapse Records) www.relapse.com

11 JOHNNY CASH

BIG RIVER

Beyond The White Stripes' feted covers of Jolene (Dolly Parton) and Rated X (Loretta Lynn), White has worked over fewer country tunes than you might imagine. But he did attack Cash's 1958 Sun single, Big River, in the company of Muscle Shoals duo the Secret Sisters for a 2010 Third Man single: White's guitar spectacularly departing from Luther Perkins' boom-chicka-boom sound on the original.

Written by Johnny Cash. Published by Hi-Lo Music



12 HENRY AND JUNE

GOIN' BACK TO MEMPHIS

An unfamiliar name, perhaps, but Henry And June was the first band of Third Man co-owner Ben Swank, prior to him drumming in the Soledad Brothers (and on recent Jack White sessions). The Toledo quartet's sole single was this menacing garage-blues rave-up from 1996, covered by The White Stripes on their 2004 Under Blackpool Lights live DVD.

Written by Forshey, Forgy, Smith. Published by James Forshey, Craig Forgy, Benjamin Smith (BMI), ℗&© copyright 1995 Human Fly Records

Alamy (5), Getty (5), Dean Fertita, © Cameron Davidson, Courtesy Michael Lloyd

OVER 20 YEARS INTO AN EXTRAORDINARY CAREER, Jack White's range of influences shows no sign of getting any narrower. In fact, studying the credits for his forthcoming *Fear Of The Dawn*, the guests and samples are more diverse than ever: Q-Tip and Cab Calloway; the Manhattan Transfer and The Jesus Lizard's Duane Denison. What might appear random eclecticism in the hands of many, however, seems infallibly coherent, a skill that makes White such a potent connector to the great music of the past.

In his cover versions, too, you can see that same kind of scholarship, energy and invention – a way of honouring tradition without being deferential to it. Hence this latest MOJO CD, compiled with the help of White's Third Man label, draws together the original versions of 14 songs that have been covered by White solo or in The White Stripes, The Raconteurs and The Dead Weather, encompassing psych, country, metal, soul, garage rock and, of course, the blues. Plus as a bonus, listen out for a real Jack rarity, as he finds wisdom in the Dylan songbook for current troubled times.

HELLO OPERATOR!
THE SONGS JACK WHITE TAUGHT US
PLUS! JACK COVERS DYLAN!
MOJO
JACK WHITE III

5 ROBERT JOHNSON
PHONOGRAPH BLUES

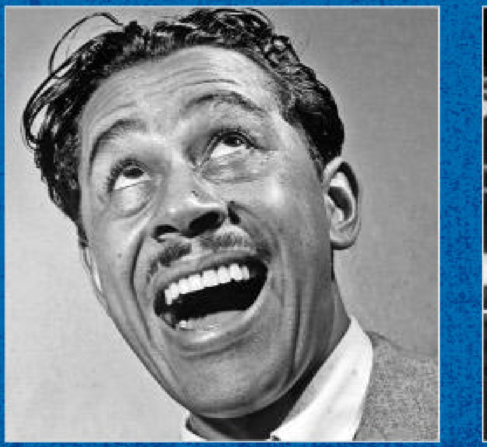
Of the 29 songs recorded by Robert Johnson in his short lifetime, Stop Breaking Down is the one most associated with White: it featured on The White Stripes' debut album in 1999. But at the duo's final gig in Southaven, on July 31, 2007, it was joined by a second Johnson tune, Phonograph Blues. You can hear their version on the *Live In Mississippi* album (2011).

Written by R Johnson. COPYRIGHT CONTROL

6 LOVE
SIGNED DC

Another gem from the LA '60s garage scene that slipped into Jack and Meg White's songbook in the '00s. Arthur Lee's desolate lament, from Love's self-titled 1966 debut, was covered in suitably minimal fashion by The White Stripes, though their version didn't surface until 2011 on a 7-inch as part of the Third Man Records Vault series.

Written by Arthur Lee. Published by Carlin Music ℗&© 1966 WEA International Inc. Licensed courtesy of Warner Music UK Ltd.



7 CAB CALLOWAY
ST. JAMES INFIRMARY

The exuberant Cotton Club scatter features on White's forthcoming *Fear Of The Dawn*, when his 1947 signature tune, Hi-De-Ho Man, is sampled on Hi De Ho. Calloway and White's repertoires intersected much earlier, though: the former had a theatrical stab at the blues standard St. James Infirmary in 1930, 69 years before it turned up on The White Stripes' debut album.

Traditional arrangement by Cab Calloway. COPYRIGHT CONTROL

8 OTIS REDDING
I'VE BEEN LOVING YOU TOO LONG

It takes a gutsy artist to tackle Otis Redding's *Otis Blue* showstopper, but White has never been anything less than fearless. You can find a super-raw White Stripes version of I've Been Loving You Too Long on the flipside of that 2011 7-inch headed up by Signed D.C.

Written by Jerry Butler Jr., Otis Ray Redding Jr. Published by Irving Music, Inc, BMI ℗&© 1965 WEA International INC. Licensed courtesy of Warner Music UK Ltd.

13 BLIND WILLIE MCTELL
THREE WOMEN BLUES

"This album is dedicated to Blind Willie McTell and Gerrit Rietveld," read the sleevenotes to *De Stijl*, and the Stripes further honoured the Piedmont bluesman by covering Your Southern Can Is Mine and Lord Send Me An Angel. White was still hooked in 2014: Three Women Blues was retooled as Three Women for the opening track of his second solo album, *Lazaretto*.

Written by W McTell. PEER MUSIC (UK) LTD

14 JACK WHITE
LICENSE TO KILL

The man himself now, compounding an ongoing love of Bob Dylan with a recent live version of this politically pointed *Infidels* track. License To Kill comes from the *Live At Cass Tech* 2019 album, a Bernie Sanders benefit show at White's old school in Detroit.

Written by Bob Dylan. Published by Universal Tunes (SESAC) ℗&©2019 Third Man Records. From *Live at Cass Tech High School Gymnasium 10-27-19* (Third Man Records) https://www.nugs.net/jack-white-concerts-live-downloads-in-mp3-flac-or-online-music-streaming/

15 CHARLEY JORDAN
KEEP IT CLEAN

One more blues for the road, courtesy of the St Louis bluesman who split his musical career with a treacherous sideline in bootlegging. Keep It Clean entered the White canon in the late 2000s, as an extravagant showcase in Raconteurs sets. Track down one spectacular version on The Raconteurs' Third Man Records Vault release, *Live In London*.

Written by Charley Jordan. COPYRIGHT CONTROL

"HANDING THINGS OFF TO THE NEXT GENERATION IS PROBABLY A GOOD IDEA, RIGHT?"

JACK WHITE: THE MOJO EXCLUSIVE

BEGINS PAGE 70

JACK WHITE

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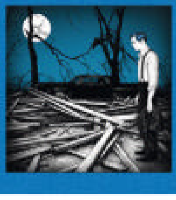

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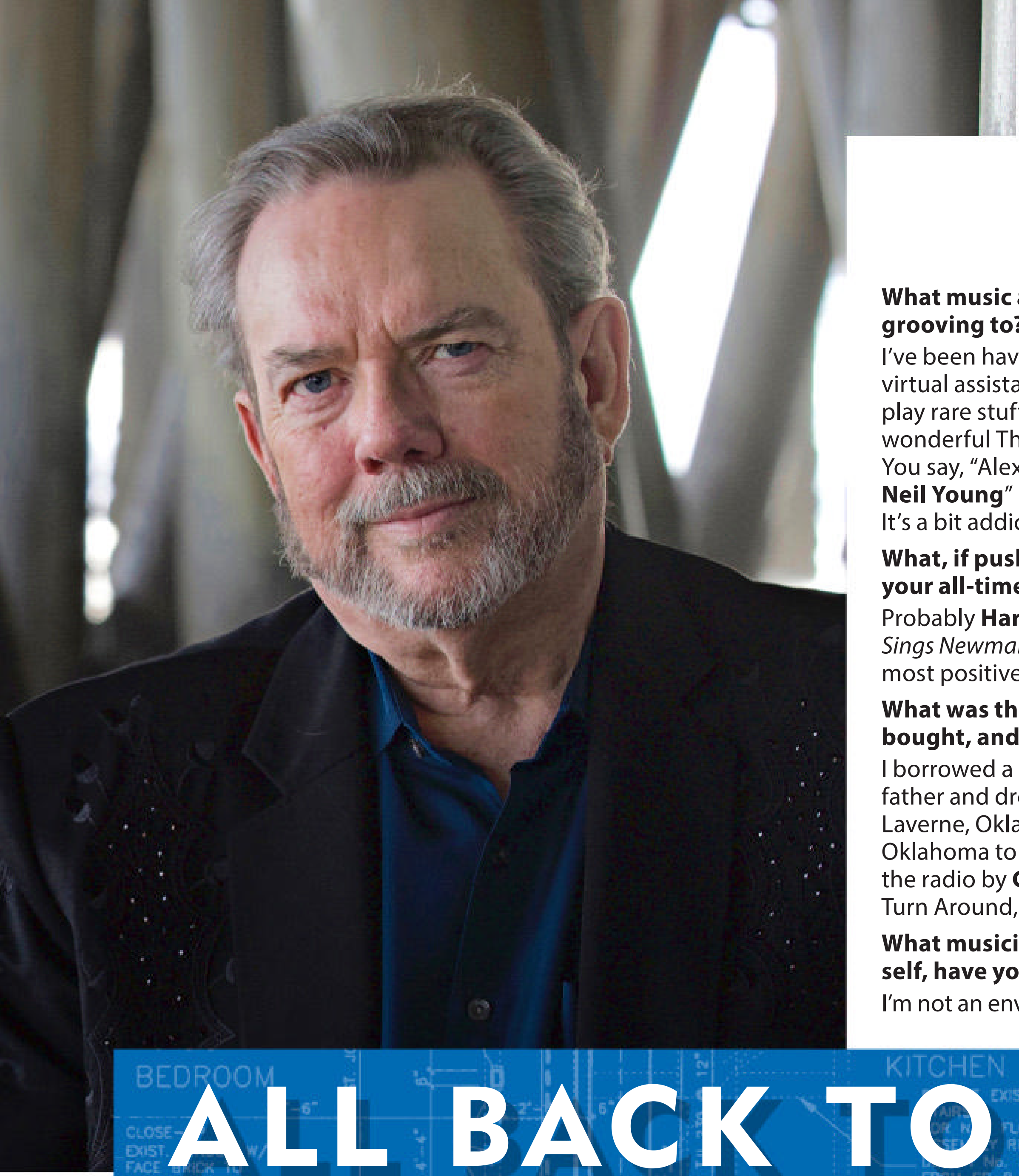


Jimmy Webb

THE SORCERER FROM WICHITA

What music are you currently grooving to?

I've been having fun with [Amazon virtual assistant] Alexa, asking her to play rare stuff like **Duane Eddy**'s wonderful Theme For Moon Children. You say, "Alexa, play Southern Man by **Neil Young**" and there it is, instantly. It's a bit addictive, like a drug.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

Probably **Harry Nilsson**'s *Nilsson Sings Newman*. It's precious in the most positive sense of the word.

What was the first record you ever bought, and where did you buy it?

I borrowed a dollar bill from my father and drove about 20 miles from Laverne, Oklahoma to Beaver, Oklahoma to buy a single I'd heard on the radio by **Glen Campbell** called Turn Around, Look At Me.

What musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

I'm not an envious person, but who wouldn't want to be **Paul McCartney**? He has the most beautiful choirboy voice, plus he can holler when he needs to sing rock'n'roll, and he has this wonderful songwriting gift.

What do you sing in the shower?

Nessun Dorma. Nothing will do in the shower but a good Italian aria.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

Sticky Fingers by **The Rolling Stones**. Or maybe some **Miles Davis**, *Sketches Of Spain* or *Birth Of The Cool*.

And your Sunday morning record?

I have trouble getting up early, but when I do eventually get up, I'll play A Vaughan Williams Hymnal by **Ralph Vaughan Williams**, sung by The Choir Of Trinity College, Cambridge. His music was my constant companion when I got sober. My father was a Baptist minister, so hymns feel right to me on a Sunday, still.

Jimmy tours the UK and Ireland May 27 – June 11. See jimmywebb.com/shows

ALL BACK TO MY PLACE

THE STARS REVEAL THE SONIC DELIGHTS GUARANTEED TO GET THEM GOING...

Tamara Lindeman

WEATHER STATION FORECASTER

What music are you currently grooving to?

June Tabor. I love her voice and have a real soft spot for British Isles folk music. Also, *Eau De Bonjourno* by **Bernice**, a Toronto band. They bring this joy, and I really am drawn to that. And **Theo Parrish**, a Detroit electronic artist.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

Pink City by **Jennifer Castle**. I think she tapped into something eternal with that record. The added dimension that it was made by someone I know and care about deepens the art for me in a beautiful way.

Brendan George Ko

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

It's pretty embarrassing – it was a CD of *The Visit* by the Canadian artist **Loreena McKennitt**, who's sort of like a borderline New Age artist. I was a little kid, my family had just got a van that had a CD-player and that was what I wanted to buy with my allowance, I'm assuming from like, HMV or something. I totally loved it.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

It would have been amazing to be a musician in the '60s, but there's no particular musician I'd want to be.

What do you sing in the shower?

Lee Ann Womack's There's More Where That Came From. It's well-written, new country music that's not offensive, cunning in a way that I really like country to be.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

Probably soul – **Curtis Mayfield**, **The Impressions**, **Marvin Gaye**, **Smokey Robinson**. I do actually look forward to being able to be out in the world again with friends, laughing and, you know, dancing!

And your Sunday morning record?

Any of **Nathan Salsburg**'s records. Really beautiful thinking music, peaceful mind music. Ideally, I'd wake up, have a coffee, stretch, maybe read The New Yorker, sit somewhere where there's some nice light coming in the window, write a song.

How Is It That I Should Look At The Stars is out now on Fat Possum. The Weather Station tour the UK this month.

Kathy Valentine

GO-GO-A-GO-GO!

What music are you currently grooving to?

I had a little explore and catching up listening session the other day, and played new or semi-new tracks from **Silk Sonic**, **Bully**, **The Beaches** and **Father John Misty**.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

Kind Of Blue, **Miles Davis**. My gateway record to jazz, the one that made it all work for me, that made me seek out everything else. Which I did for many years in the '90s, and it was that same heart-racing, elated feeling I got when I was discovering rock'n'roll – it was amazing to be so enthralled about a whole new world of music.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

As a kid and adolescent I was obsessed with **Herb Alpert & The Tijuana Brass** and **The Beatles** and the Top 40. I don't remember my first 45 single, which is all I bought for years, so I'll go with my first album, which was *Led Zeppelin II*. I would have bought it at the first shopping mall in Austin, at Disc Records. I'm sure I got it so I'd seem cooler than I was. Probably my friend's big brothers and sisters had it.

> "In the shower I sing made-up opera in a fake accent."
>
> KATHY VALENTINE

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

Jimi Hendrix. No need to elaborate.

What do you sing in the shower?

Well sadly, it could be old TV show themes, advert jingles, or made-up opera in a fake accent. But lately I've been stuck on [**Faces**'] Ooh La La.

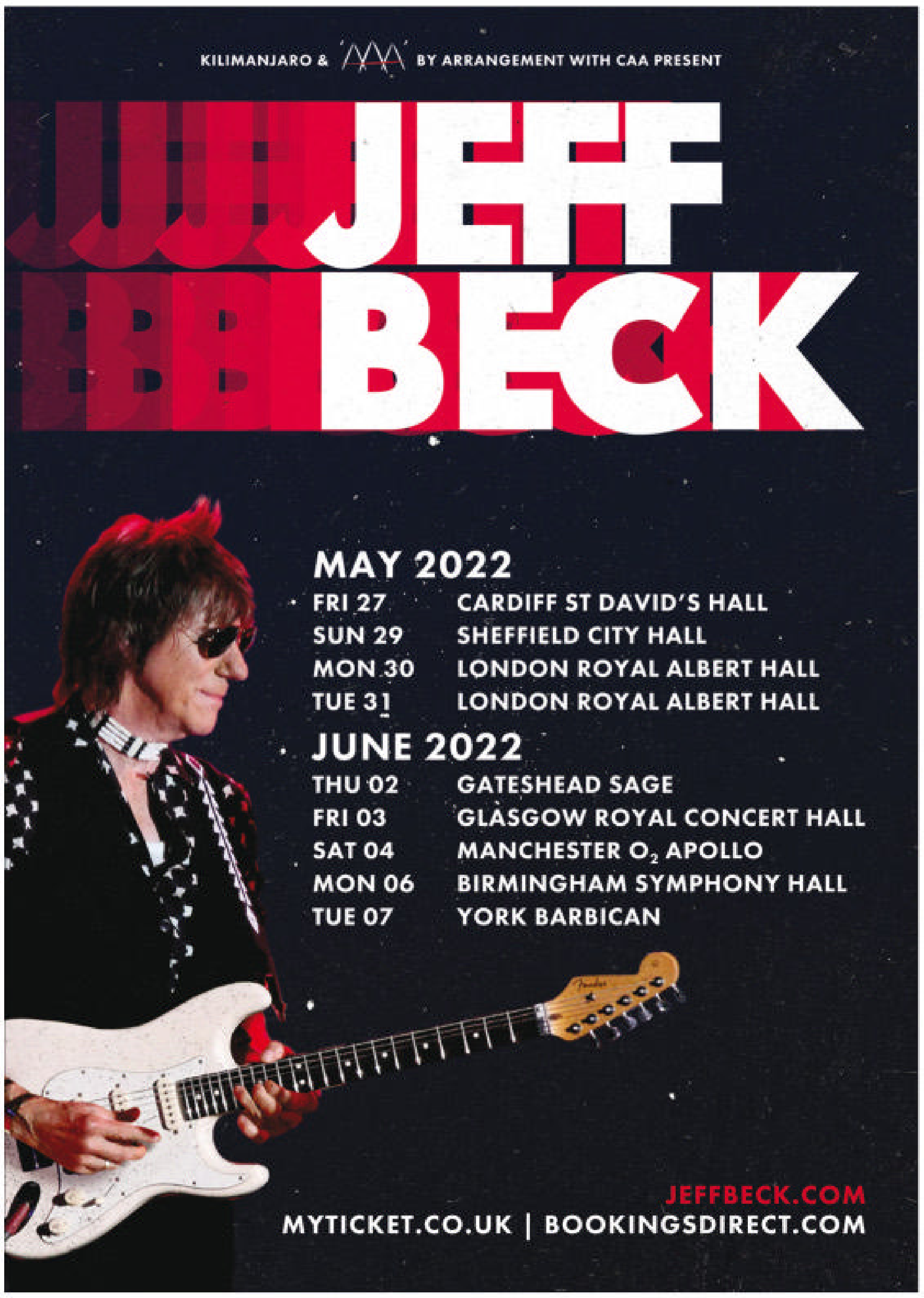
What is your favourite Saturday night record?

Oh, it has to be get-down music. Probably an old-school funk playlist with **Ohio Players**, **Isley Brothers**, **P-Funk**, **Commodores**, **James Brown**, **Maceo Parker**.

And your Sunday morning record?

Some **Toots And The Maytals** or **Bob Marley**, to get some chill energy flowing.

All I Ever Wanted: A Rock 'N' Roll Memoir is published by Jawbone.



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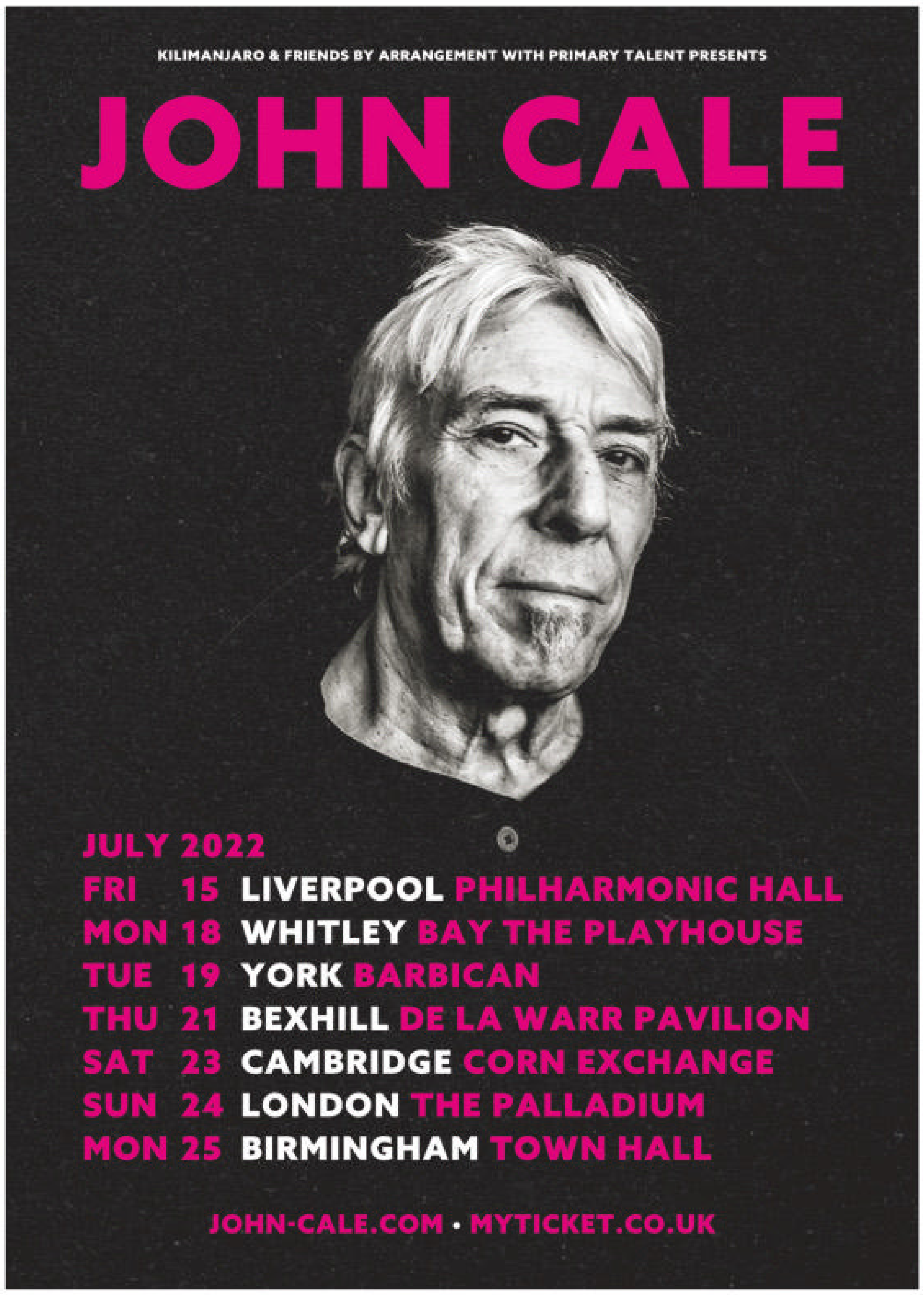

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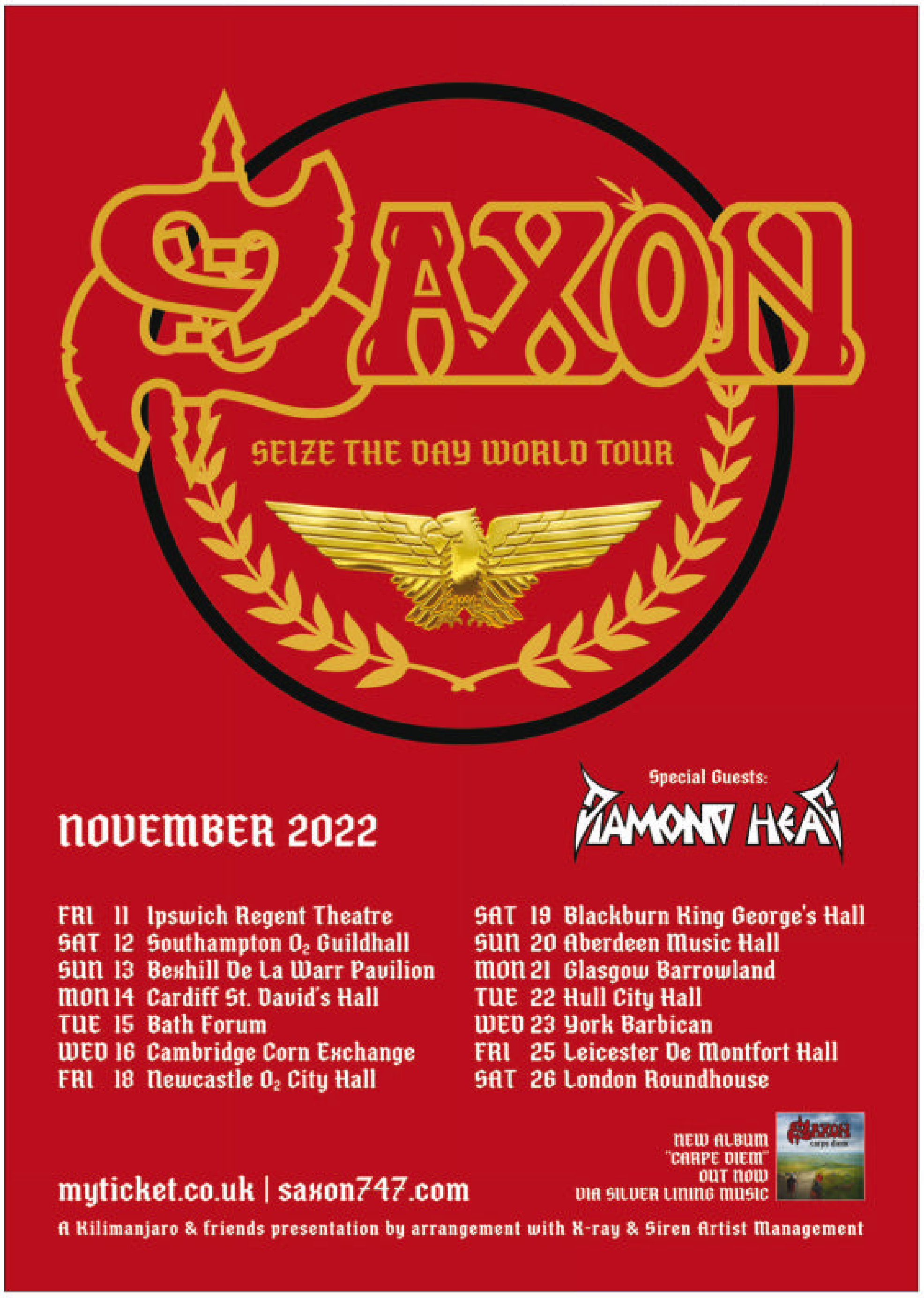

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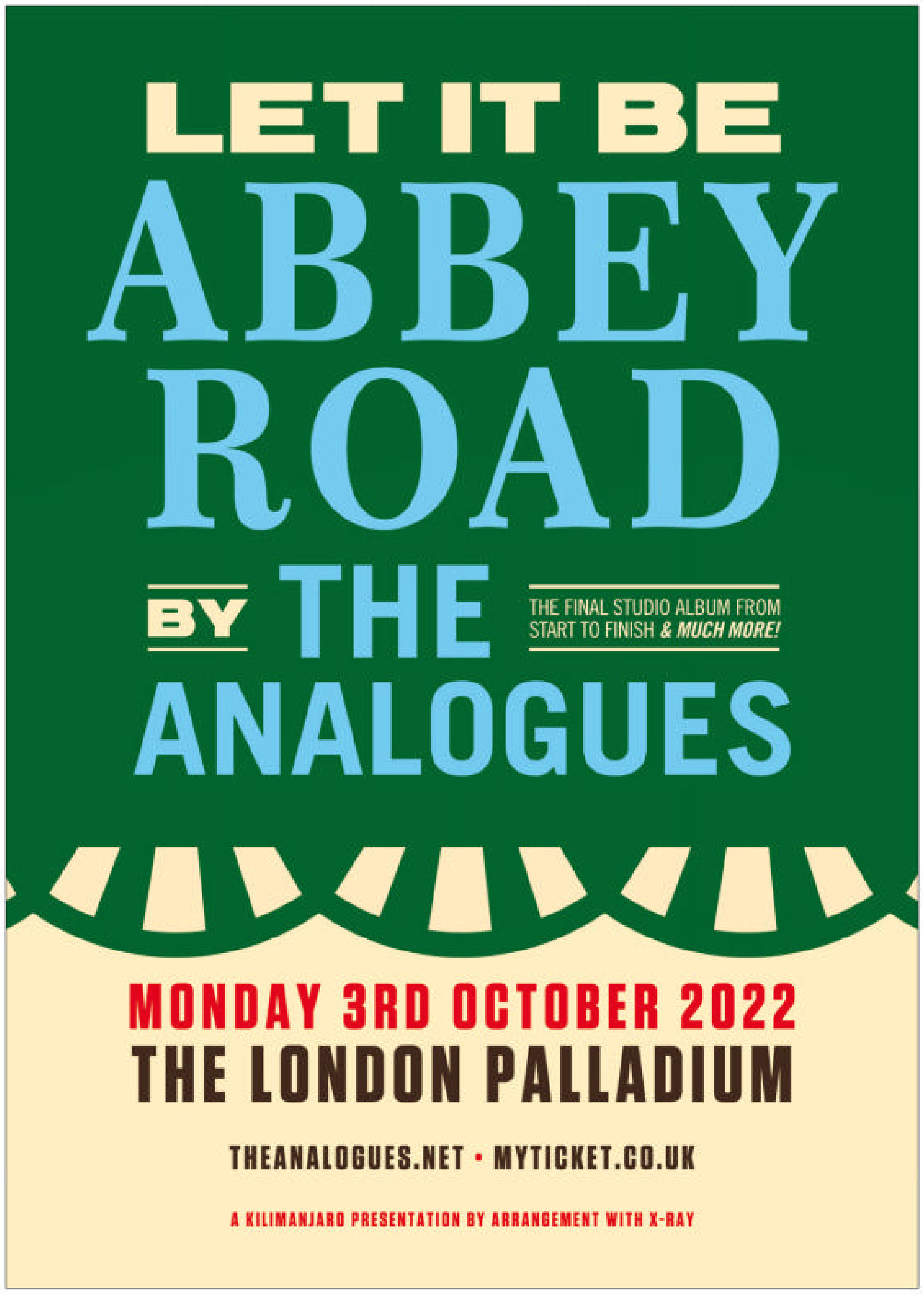

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Subscriber queries: bauer@subscription.co.uk
General e-mail: mojo@bauermedia.co.uk
Website: mojo4music.com

Editor John Mulvey
Senior Editor Danny Eccleston
Art Editor Mark Wagstaff
Production Editor Simon McEwen
Associate Editor (Reviews) Jenny Bulley
Associate Editor (News) Ian Harrison
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Picture Editor Matt Turner
Senior Associate Editor Andrew Male
Contributing Editors Phil Alexander, Keith Cameron, Sylvie Simmons

Thanks for their help with this issue: Keith Cameron, Del Gentleman, Ian Whent

Among this month's contributors: Manish Agarwal, John Aizlewood, Martin Aston, Mike Barnes, Mark Blake, Glyn Brown, John Bungey, Keith Cameron, Stevie Chick, Andrew Collins, Andy Cowan, Grayson Haver Currin, Max Decharne, Tom Doyle, David Fricke, Andy Fyfe, Pat Gilbert, David Hutcheon, Jim Irvin, Colin Irwin, David Katz, Dorian Lynskey, Andrew Male, Bob Mehr, James McNair, Lucy O'Brien, Mark Paytress, Andrew Perry, Clive Prior, Jon Savage, Victoria Segal, David Sheppard, Michael Simmons, Sylvie Simmons, Mat Snow, Ben Thompson, Gianluca Tramontana, Kieron Tyler, Ben Wardle, Charles Waring, Lois Wilson, Stephen Worthy.

Among this month's photographers: Cover: Tom Oldham (inset: Getty), Piers Allardyce, Greg Allen, Marina Chavez, Cameron Davidson, Phillip A Harrington, Wolfgang Heilemann, Alex Lake, Philippe Levy, Gered Mankowitz, Michael Miller, Keith Morris, Terry O'Neill, Charles Peterson, Paul Rider, Tom Sheehan, Kees Tabak, Andrew Testa, Justin Thomas, Barrie Wentzell.

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Theories, rants, etc.

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THERE'S A STRIKING MOMENT AT THE end of Jack White's new album, *Fear Of The Dawn*. "This is the real me," he sings plaintively in Shedding My Velvet. "I'm not as bad as I was/But I'm not as good as I can be." For those of us who may have been unhealthily fixated on White's long juggle between honesty and artifice, it marks the start of a new era. "Everything I'm doing right now," he tells us this month, "is all rebirth."

A great time, then, to catch up with this most compelling of modern artists. For this issue of MOJO, White gave us unparalleled access to his domain and processes. If you've seen the video for Fear Of The Dawn, it was even worked on by our writer, Grayson Haver Currin, as part of his interview with Jack. There are stories of Bowie, Prince, the Stones, Beyoncé and staring into the sun, about turning your back on negative energy. "Can you be an artist in a stable place?" White ponders. *Fear Of The Dawn*, and this month's cover story, make the answer to that question pretty self-evident. But are we sure that's his real hair colour?

JOHN MULVEY, EDITOR

I can tell you this: it is important – vitally

As Willie 'Pops' Mitchell's grandson and co-owner of the legendary Royal Studios, my family and I appreciate the sentiment that went into Bob Mehr's article [MOJO 340] on the making of Al Green's *Let's Stay Together*. However, there is a glaring error in the piece that needs to be corrected.

The story claims that, "As was the case with Let's Stay Together, Mitchell often took Green's singles across town to mix at John Fry's Ardent Studios." None of Al Green's classic singles were ever mixed at Ardent. The only Al Green project worked on at Ardent during that time was some vocal overdubs for the *Green Is Blues* album.

In regard to Let's Stay Together, Willie's daughter, my aunt Yvonne, was here at Royal Studios with him when he mixed the track and album. Pops told me personally that he and Yvonne stayed up for three days and nights as he worked on the mix. Yvonne corroborates this story as she was his tape op for the session. Further, this is also confirmed by the musicians that played on the album, including the surviving members of Hi Rhythm (among them, Leroy Hodges, Charles Hodges and Archie 'Hubbie' Turner). In short: Willie Mitchell produced, engineered and mixed every classic Al Green single and album here at Royal Studios.

On the *Let's Stay Together* album, one notable memory is that Pops constantly sobbed during the mixing of How Can You Mend A Broken Heart as it was the most emotional song to him. When the album was finally mixed, he went outside in the sunlight and cried tears of joy because he knew he had completed a masterpiece. Thanks for correcting that and setting the record straight.

Lawrence 'Boo' Mitchell, Royal Studios, Memphis

We're a long way from home

Your mention of the Flower Travellin' Band in your 1971 Nuggets article [MOJO 339] brought back a distant memory of the band's concert at my high school in Scarborough, Ontario in 1971-72. They had come to the attention of local heroes Lighthouse when the latter played Expo 70 in Tokyo; it was suggested they come to Canada, and they did after recording *Satori*, which became a local FM staple for a while. This would have been the first real rock band I ever saw live (it was an actual concert in the school auditorium, too, not a dance in the gym). I remember a bunch of us being up on-stage at the end of their set as well. My next show? The Stones in '72…

Ian Mitchell, Oshawa, Ontario

➢

◄ …First off, many thanks for mentioning The Wackers and their *Wackering Heights* album in 1971 Nuggets. Such a great band that unfortunately got swept under the rug. Seeing that you mentioned suggesting other 1971 fabness, I'll put forward the self-titled album by Parrish & Gurvitz, produced by some guy named George Martin. Start with a little Beatles, add some CSN and a dose of themselves, shake and stir. Wonderfulness ensues.

Glenn Christensen, Gurnee, Illinois

All of a sudden you know a whole damn lot about submarines

Loved the piece on Pink Floyd's Echoes [MOJO 340]. It has always been a great favourite ever since hearing that first sonic 'ping' from Rick Wright. You had a piece on longer songs, and there are a few opuses that are close to that edge – mostly by Yes: The Gates Of Delirium from *Relayer* and Ritual from *Tales From Topographic Oceans* both go over 20 minutes. There's also Poland from Tangerine Dream at 22:23 mins, but it's some of the modern progsters who crash the 23:25 barrier: Porcupine Tree with The Sky Moves Sideways at 34:43, and the ever-prolific Dream Theater with Octavarium, which comes in at 24:00. More bang for your buck, eh?

Yours – with not much on today, clearly.

Marc Blake, via e-mail

All right sir, I'm impressed

Thanks for the great tribute to Michael Nesmith [MOJO 340]. I was fortunate to do a Zoom Meet & Greet with him on the last day before he set off to rehearse for what turned out to be his last tour. He was very friendly, answered all my questions, told me that he was looking forward to coming back to the UK in 2022 and promised to perform Don't Wait For Me, one of my favourite songs of his, during his visit – a song that he had not performed live since his Monkees days. I mentioned to him that in the current MOJO magazine a reader had written in saying that it was about time his 1968 album, *The Wichita Train Whistle Sings*, was re-evaluated; this made him smile. When I said that I had just listened to it, he asked me if I could still stand it!

They say that you shouldn't meet your heroes, but I am so pleased that I managed to speak to him after being a fan for 55 years. I have a copy of our 30-minute chat, which I will treasure.

Richard Fennell, Milton Keynes

Rest easy!

On hearing of Mike Nesmith's passing, I was going to write to you droning on about his totally underrated cool genius and how *Nevada Fighter* was an absolute Cosmic Cowboy gem, but your excellent coverage means I can relax on that front. So instead let me congratulate you on the best MOJO cover since Issue 2! The boys look out through the walls of time at the MOJO nation with smiles, curiosity, confrontation and a quizzical stare, keeping a brotherly eye on us from Monkee Headquarters.

Clive Goodyer, via e-mail

…Your cover story on Michael Nesmith's career with The Monkees and as a solo artist was comprehensive and enlightening. Borrowing a phrase applied to John Lennon, Nez was "the thinking man's Monkee". In addition to the recordings featuring him in a group or solo context, take note of his stellar production (with Red Rhodes on pedal steel) of Bert Jansch's excellent 1974 release *L.A. Turnaround*. A 22-minute YouTube video documents the sessions conducted at Luxford House, Crowborough, Sussex.

Patrick Grant, Houston

We operate on a first name basis. My first name is Captain.

I was surprised to hear that Questlove had any trouble locating the original version of Stand! without the well-known coda [MOJO 338]. My understanding has always been that there was a 'rejected' Family Stone version which Sly hastily re-recorded not with his band, but with the help of studio musicians. The original Family Stone version is out there, and it shouldn't be too difficult to find. It was reissued as part of the Epic Hall Of Fame 45 series (all reissued with grey labels in generic Hall Of Fame sleeves). Due to some sort of mix up, the HOF Cat# 15-2304 (ZSP 13864-2) is actually the original version.

Andy Peterson, Aurora, Illinois

I know how to lie, steal, kidnap, counterfeit, suborn and kill. That's my job.

It's rare after MOJO lands on my doormat that I open up the letters page and have a lightbulb moment. Maybe it's because I was watching All The President's Men when MOJO 341 arrived, but I think I may have a future in investigative journalism. George Harrison looking magnificent on the cover, then the letters headlines being lifts from The Life Of Brian! Handmade Films! By Jehovah I got it!

Keep up the good work – can't believe Blow Away didn't make that George Top 30!

Gary Russell, London

…I couldn't help noticing Don't Bother Me was not in George's 30 best. I gotta be honest, I was Stones and my brother was Beatles when it all kicked off, but it was my favourite on *With The Beatles*.

Roy King, via e-mail

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Printing: William Gibbons
MOJO (ISSN 1351-0193; USPS 17424) is published 12 times a year by H Bauer Publishing Ltd, Media House, Peterborough Business Park, Lynch Wood, Peterborough PE2 6EA, United Kingdom. H Bauer Publishing is a company registered in England and Wales with company number LP003328, registered address Academic House, 24-28 Oval Road, London NW1 7DT. VAT no 918 5617 01.
The US annual subscription price is $114.98. Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named World Container Inc, 150-15, 183rd Street, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn, NY 11256. US Postmaster: Send address changes to MOJO, World Container Inc, 150-15, 183rd Street, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA. Subscription records are maintained at H Bauer, Subscriptions, CDS Global, Tower House, Sovereign Park, Lathkill Street, Market Harborough, Leicester LE16 9EF, United Kingdom. Air Business Ltd is acting as our mailing agent. For subscription or back issue queries, please contact CDS Global on Bauer@subscription.co.uk Phone from the UK on 01858 43 8884. Phone from overseas on +44 (0)1858 43 8884. For enquires on overseas newsstand sales e-mail Paul.Maher@seymour.co.uk

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WHAT GOES ON!

THE HOT NEWS AND BIZARRE STORIES FROM PLANET **MOJO**

Standing On The Edge

Voice of unflinching catharsis, **Mark Lanegan's** voyage reached its end on February 22. His friend **Keith Cameron** remembers him.

SO OFTEN HAD Mark Lanegan cheated death, it became easy to assume the man was indestructible. Unlike Kurt Cobain, Jeffrey Lee Pierce and Layne Staley, friends and musical peers, he survived years of brutal drug addiction, a horror show unflinchingly recounted in his 2020 memoir Sing Backwards And Weep – written at the behest of Anthony Bourdain, another friend lost to the demons.

Lanegan had also survived Covid, which in March 2021 saw him hospitalised in his new domain of south-west Ireland. For three weeks he lay in a coma. Only the intervention of his wife Shelley prevented doctors performing an emergency tracheotomy; she feared he might lose the ability to sing, and thus also the will to live. Yet months later, Lanegan was discharged, scans revealing healthily functional organs, his symptoms "normal, post-Covid".

Hence the widespread shock at the statement on February 22: "Our beloved friend Mark Lanegan passed away this morning at his home in Killarney, Ireland." No cause of death was given. His book publisher White Rabbit mourned the "colossal loss [of] a supremely gifted performer, songwriter, artist and author." The tributes paid by musicians including John Cale, Iggy Pop, J Mascis, Nadine Shah and Warren Ellis attested to Lanegan's generosity as a collaborator, as well as the emotional resonance of that voice, an asphalt-laced linctus for the soul, implacably driven to wander the twilight zones of existence. "Mark Lanegan will always be etched in my heart," Cale said, "as he surely touched so many with his genuine self, no matter the cost, true to the end."

Born in 1964 into a troubled, abusive household, Mark Lanegan's teenage years in the eastern Washington town of Ellensburg saw him jailed for petty theft and drug-dealing. He escaped via Screaming Trees, a band founded by brothers Gary Lee and Van Conner, whose parents had employed the physically intimidating Lanegan to repossess TVs. Screaming Trees eventually found modest fame amid the upsurgent Seattle rock scene of the '90s, albeit only after the singer had taken control of songwriting on 1992's breakthrough *Sweet Oblivion*. By the time the band's violent dysfunction sealed its demise after 1996's *Dust*, Lanegan had released two solo albums: 1994's baroque blues masterpiece *Whiskey For The Holy Ghost*, made amid the chaos of heroin addiction, and 1990's *The Winding Sheet*, byproduct of an abortive Leadbelly covers project with Kurt Cobain, who used Lanegan's treatment of Where Did You Sleep Last Night as the finale of Nirvana's Unplugged set.

Sing Backwards And Weep ends with Layne Staley's death in 2002, by which point Lanegan had completed rehab, thanks to financial help from Courtney Love, and Duff McKagan lending him a house in Los Angeles, where he recorded 2001's *Field Songs*: an attempt to re-make *Whiskey* "from the other side of the fence", ie, clean. From a career perspective, however, it was 2004's *Bubblegum* which heralded Lanegan's artistic rebirth: electro-gothic blues produced by Alain Johannes, with guests including P.J. Harvey and Josh Homme. This template sustained his work from thereon, culminating in 2020's epic *Straight Songs Of Sorrow*.

Lanegan the addict struggled to make music, but sober he became a prolific collaborator: he joined Greg Dulli as The Gutter Twins and became an auxiliary member of Queens Of The Stone Age (his tenure ending with a slip off the wagon, which landed him in a coma for eight days). A trio of acclaimed country-noir albums saw him play 'Nancy' to Isobel Campbell's 'Lee'; he made two albums apiece with Anglo-US downtempo producers Soulsavers and UK guitarist Duke Garwood; and lent his voice to myriad one-offs, including U.N.K.L.E., Moby, Dave Gahan, and Martina Topley-Bird. Just before contracting Covid, he recorded Blank Diary Entry on Manic Street Preachers' *The Ultra Vivid Lament*. In interviews around last December's Covid memoir Devil In A Coma, he confirmed new music was in progress.

Scouring Mark Lanegan's work for intimations of his fate is futile, because few writers have lingered so persistently in mortality's shadow. During our many interviews between 1992 and 2020, he was always the gentleman, tough on the outside, tender within. In 2019, we talked about Way To Tomorrow, the song he wrote upon Layne Staley's passing, with its anguished opening line: "Carry that weight but it's too heavy, lord". How, I wondered, had Lanegan found the way to tomorrow? "Pure luck, dude," he smiled, that infernal voice now quiet, calm, and inescapably sad.

SCREAMING TREES
SWEET OBLIVION
MARK LANEGAN
WHISKEY FOR THE HOLY GHOST
MARK LANEGAN
STRAIGHT SONGS OF SORROW

Last one in the world: (main) Mark Lanegan in 2011; (above) smouldering in Seattle, 1993, circa *Whiskey For The Holy Ghost*; (inset) landmark albums.

> "That voice, an asphalt-laced linctus for the soul, implacably driven to wander the twilight zones of existence..."

Credit
Sam Holden, Charles Peterson

Sons on the rise again: Taj Mahal and Ry Cooder relive the blues odyssey of their younger selves; (main pic) Taj and Ry in Los Angeles, 1966.

Old Friends, The Blues...

Reunited at last, **Taj Mahal & Ry Cooder** hail the genius of **Sonny Terry & Brownie McGhee.**

TAJ MAHAL, 80 in May, and Ry Cooder, who's just turned 75, are rejoicing in a reunion 55 years since they last recorded together. "We're now in the position of the guys we liked when we were coming through. We're the old-timers now!" laughs Taj. "We've been around long enough to come full circle and create a project like this with a front porch, back porch, relaxed feel… showing what it's like to be re-inspired by what started us out in the first place."

He's talking about their first ever duo album, recorded in just three days with Ry's son Joaquin on percussion in Cooder Jr's front room. *Get On Board: The Songs Of Sonny Terry & Brownie McGhee* pays tribute to a duo of a previous generation, one that lasted 45 years, bringing the Piedmont blues of their native Southeastern USA to the coffee houses and clubs of the folk scene, as a white audience discovered the style just as it fell from favour among black audiences.

"We were very collegial and could sit there for hours singing Sleepy John Estes, Blind Boy Fuller… and Brownie and Sonny," recalls Cooder. "We knew them from records, but then the folk festival scene mushroomed and all these traditional players from the South started showing up. I was from Santa Monica, the dullest place in the world, so it was amazing that now you could sit six feet away from Skip James and Mississippi John Hurt.

"Sonny and Brownie would walk through the crowd to the stage of the Ash Grove [famed folk club on LA's Melrose Avenue], one of them blind, the other crippled, and just that walk was a performance. They'd sit on stools and belt it out. You could study Sonny with his harmonica technique and Brownie with his guitar technique – it was all there to be learned if you could."

"I was totally knocked out by them," Taj enthuses. "They were magnificent. They were friendly and approachable, an example to me, though Brownie could be a little testy if you weren't respectful."

Though "so shy as a teenager", Cooder did "once or twice between sets" press Brownie to show him certain techniques: "He was friendly as long as you didn't push too hard," he says. "Brownie had it all figured out. In '53 he knew the audience that was coming and contoured the show for people who didn't go to juke joints, didn't really know what blues was. He went to elocution school to learn how to talk so that white people could understand him. He was very smart; he saw the future."

Back in 1964 you'd have been a very smart futurologist to foresee how a smattering of tiny folk-blues scenes would soon coalesce to become a big noise as rock music boomed. When his pal Jesse Lee Kincaid alerted Taj, based in Massachusetts, to this 17-year-old guitar prodigy on the West Coast, distance was no object.

"I had to meet him," says Taj, "so we set up a tour which took us to Detroit then out to California. Ry was the first person I looked up. I can still visualise him. We were on Rambla Vista Road off the Pacific Coast Highway and sat down and played. It was obvious that this guy heard the music, not something like it, not some version; he heard it and made his own music of what he heard. That's what I was always looking for."

What's more, "he gave me a book about black cowboys, maybe half of all cowboys; we never saw this on the screen. By my third album, that was my image."

Taj, Ry and Jesse formed The Rising Sons, mixing folk-blues and folk rock, and got snapped up by Columbia in the gold rush following The Byrds' hit Mr. Tambourine Man. But it didn't work out, with the album shelved until 1992, while The Lovin' Spoonful cleaned up on a similar tip.

Cooder contributed to Taj's 1968 debut album but thereafter they pursued parallel paths until, decades later, Taj got in touch to wish Ry a happy birthday, and the idea of reconvening gained shape. "I got a bunch of instruments and took the train down to LA," recalls Taj. "Every day we played some, talked some, and inched back to a place where we could see something was happening."

They needed a project, and Cooder supplied it. The Sonny-Brownie songbook was ideal for an album "that would hang together: likeable songs, not obscure, played on guitar and harmonica. Perfect for us."

What next? "We're going to play two nights in a joint in San Francisco I like," says Cooder, "do a juke joint thing, not just Brownie and Sonny, and stomp it down to the bricks, as they used to say. Let's see what we can pull off."

Mat Snow

> **"Brownie could be a little testy if you weren't respectful."**
> **TAJ MAHAL**

Get On Board: The Songs Of Sonny Terry & Brownie McGhee is out in April on Nonesuch.

Charlie Grey, Matt Kennedy

ELVIS COSTELLO & THE IMPOSTERS

PHOTO: MARK SELIGER

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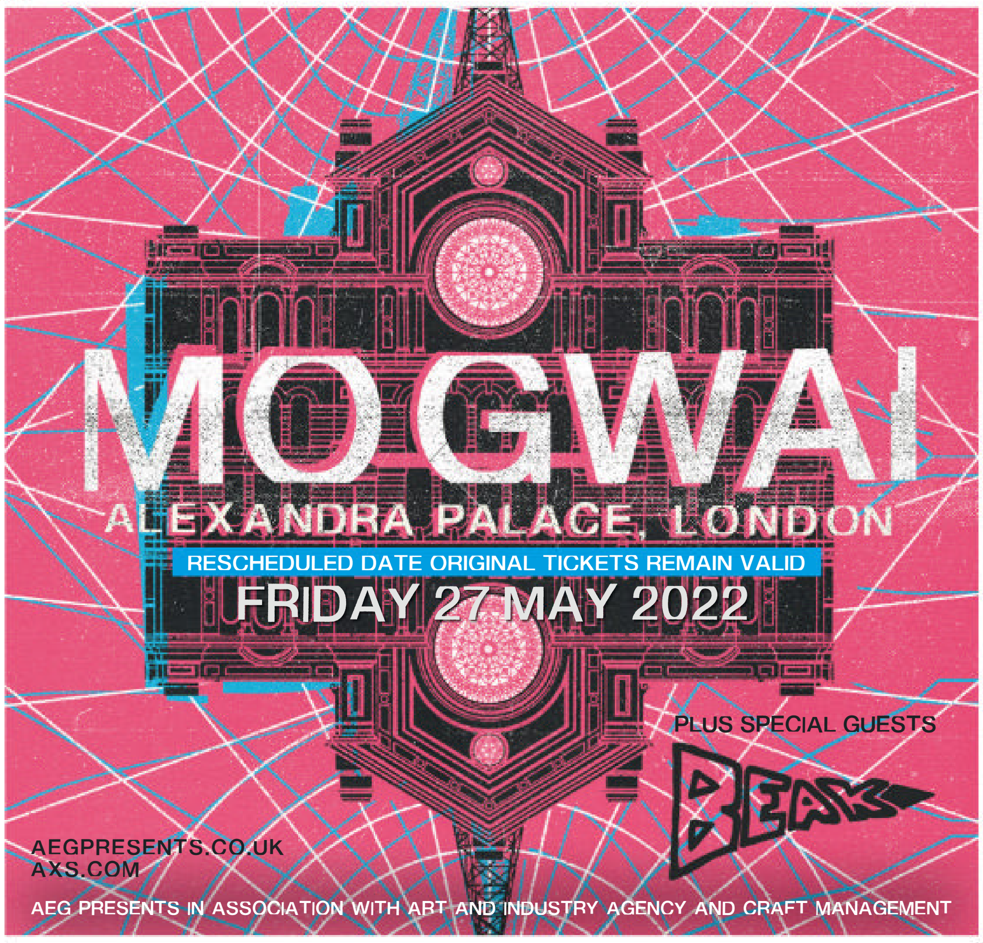

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Songs of freedom: Sigur Rós (singer Jónsi, above) in the studio of returning bassist Kjartan Sveinsson (below, far lefty).

AFTER NINE YEARS, SIGUR RÓS RETURN TO HIT THE GROUND RUNNING FOR LP EIGHT

A HALF-HOUR drive from Reykjavík, in the converted swimming pool that was Sigur Rós' studio for a decade before their former keyboard player Kjartan Sveinsson took it over, the Icelandic post-rock ensemble are buckling down to forge their first studio album since *Kveikur* in 2013.

"It was normal for us to take a break before, for two or three years," reports bassist Georg Hólm. "I guess it's abnormal being nine, but things happened. And maybe we'd have been further along if it wasn't for Covid."

"Things happened" is an understatement. It's been a tumultuous time for a band whose majestic post-rock fission felt more suited to stargazing than matters on the ground. In 2016, Sigur Rós were charged with tax evasion: all charges and fines were repaid whilst citing their accountant's "mishandling" of affairs, but were recharged – Icelandic law allows 'double jeopardy' – and acquitted.

Wanting out of the country during negotiations, their world tour lasted a back-breaking 18 months; on their return, drummer Orri Páll Dýrason was accused of sexual assault and left the band. Singer/guitarist Jónsi moved to Los Angeles, ostensibly to work on his second solo album, but he and Sveinsson decided to write together again, more for pleasure than any game plan. But when Hólm heard what they'd been recording, "I thought, I can be part of it," he says.

"Initially, it was nothing to do with Sigur Rós, but with time it became the obvious way forward, Georg brings so much energy," says Sveinsson, who is officially back in the fold after nine years' absence. "There is a saying in Icelandic," he adds, "and in English too, that we have hit the ground running."

That said, the album still lacks a title, song titles and lyrics, all typical afterthoughts in Sigur Rós-world. All they'll reveal is another forthcoming session at London's Abbey Road to record orchestral parts (last heard on a Sigur Rós record in 2008), on top of "our same elements, the bold guitar and piano and Georg's fat bass sounds," says Sveinsson. "Will there be drums? Possibly not."

Hólm: "I don't feel this record is going to be an aggressive one like *Kveikur*. For the time being at least."

"Everything seems quite open-ended," adds Sveinsson. "For example, today we recorded a lot of electronics. In the end, it might be completely different. That's very Sigur Rós."

One thought that the band are keeping in mind is a favourite saying of their former producer, the late Ken Thomas: "He'd say, 'Music is just moving air'," recalls Hólm. "Music that comes out of amps sounds different to what comes out of a machine."

Jónsi: "We want not to just make it sound good but to capture the soul of a performance."

With a world tour starting April 30, the trio know they have a finite time to capture their soul on this occasion. "It's worrying and I'm having nightmares about it, but it's kind of fun too," Holm grins. "It's good to be busy again."

Martin Aston

"Will there be drums? Possibly not."
KJARTAN SVEINSSON

FACT SHEET

Title: TBC
Due: Autumn 2022
Production: band/ Birgir Jón Birgisson
Songs: TBC
The Buzz: "When we started, we thought, Wouldn't it be nice to do something beautiful?" *Kjartan Sveinsson*

ALSO WORKING

...**Jeff Tweedy** (right) announced last month, "I've been in the studio with **WILCO** making some new music, chipping away at a new record. It's been very, very, very fun and exciting, and we're having a great time... if I can get everybody in the Wilco braintrust on board, maybe I'll share a snippet of a work in progress" ...enigmatic studio images of **P.J. HARVEY** (right) with guitar, effects pedals and microphone have emerged, suggesting she's recording new music ...session bass trouper **Guy Pratt** shared an image of himself with **PETE TOWNSHEND** in a recording studio with the words, "To say the last couple of days recording has been beyond magical would be an understatement." Whether it's a solo Townshend project, new Who or something else, was not revealed ... film of **FONTAINES D.C.** recording with **Slowthai** in producer **Dan Carey**'s south London studio was released last month ...former Bodysnatchers vocalist **RHODA DAKAR** will release a new solo LP in the autumn. It will include her reggae cover of Bowie's The Man Who Sold The World... **LIAM GALLAGHER** spoke last month to Radio X's **Chris Moyles** about his impending LP *C'Mon You Know*: "Some of it's odd, man. 80 per cent of it is a bit peculiar... I still sound normal, and mega..." ...**Craig** and **Charlie Reid** of **THE PROCLAIMERS** will record their twelfth LP later this year, following up 2018's *Angry Cyclist* ... **PEARL JAM** are planning a new album with **Andrew Watt**, who also produced Eddie Vedder's recent solo LP *Earthling*...

Dean Deblois, Getty (2)

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Each date will feature a selection from the acts featured and not all of the acts on the line up. For further information please refer to modsmayday.com

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THE BEAT

'...STILL CAN'T STOP IT' TOUR

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Sat 18 June	Frome	Cheese and Grain
Sun 19 June	Leeds	The Old Woollen
Tue 21 June	Manchester	Academy 2
Wed 22 June	Newcastle	Riverside
Thu 23 June	Edinburgh	Liquid Room
Fri 24 June	Glasgow	SOLD OUT
Sat 25 June	Glasgow	QMU
Mon 27 June	Birmingham	SOLD OUT
Wed 29 June	Bilston	Robin 2
Thu 30 June	Liverpool	SOLD OUT
Fri 1 July	Bristol	SOLD OUT
Sun 3 July	London	Koko
Tue 5 July	Norwich	Epic Studios
Wed 6 July	London	SOLD OUT
Thu 7 July	Colchester	Arts Centre
Fri 8 July	Margate	Dreamland
Mon 11 July	Guildford	The Boileroom
Thu 14 July	Brighton	SOLD OUT
Fri 15 July	Cardiff	The Great Hall
Sat 16 July	Nottingham	Rock City
Mon 18 July	Cambridge	Junction
Wed 20 July	Isle of Wight	Strings & Bar Club
Thu 21 July	Liverpool	Grand Central Hall
Fri 22 July	Belfast	Limelight 2
Sat 23 July	Dublin	Opium

FROM THE JAM

UNPLUGGED

MAY 2022

FRI 13 - MILTON KEYNES
STABLES

SAT 14 - COLCHESTER
ARTS CENTRE

THU 19 - ASHFORD
REVELATION AT ST. MARYS

FRI 20 - LONDON
CADOGAN HALL

SAT 21 - WORTHING
THE VENUE

SAT 28 - BURNLEY
MECHANICS

JUNE 2022

WED 01 - GILLINGHAM
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Sweet little Yorick'n'roller: Alice Cooper digs up an old friend.

Getty

ALICE COOPER

The Nightmare man talks Detroit, Lou Reed and the beast inside.

FREED FROM Covid restrictions, self-confessed "road rat" Alice Cooper is back touring the US. Four shows in, he has a day off in Louisville, Kentucky, and is entertaining MOJO at (his) 8am, after his daily round of golf. Back in 1970, Detroit's Alice Cooper band were a ragged, pioneeringly gender-neutral tour de force touting such lean, mean anthems as I'm Eighteen and School's Out, plus on-stage mock executions and shameless python action. The momentum continued when Alice went solo in 1975 with *Welcome To My Nightmare*, and after a relatively fallow '90s and '00s, 2011's *Welcome 2 My Nightmare* sequel triggered a renaissance; 2021's back-to-basics *Detroit Stories* went UK Top 5 and was his first Billboard Album topper. And the stories he can divulge, even at 8am: Alice Cooper, super-trooper.

What was it like not being able to tour?

Like coming off of a drug. Every night, you get a shot of adrenaline which can't compare with anything else. The last show before it all closed down was with Queen and 95,000 people in Sydney. When we restarted touring last September, we were like giddy little kids just rehearsing.

The current show is bookended by Feed My Frankenstein and Teenage Frankenstein. What's the fascination with Frankenstein?

We wanted to get back to songs we hadn't done in a long time. It's different pieces from different albums, all sewn together like Frankenstein. We have a giant Alice Frankenstein, and a giant baby who comes out for Billion Dollar Babies… Executions? Poor Alice, he cannot avoid the guillotine. But Alice is always reborn in a white hat and tails for School's Out. That's my favourite Alice, the leader of the circus.

Does your love of horror predate Alice?

Even when I was 10, I'd go to the movies to see Creature From The Black Lagoon and The Thing That Couldn't Die. I saw humour in them, and those classic '30s horrors, Frankenstein, Dracula and Wolfman, they're like old friends. I've never been into torture rock or movies with someone on the operating table. For me, it's the idea there's a monster inside us, and Alice brings that monster out. Alice's monster happens to be very showbizzy – if Fred Astaire and Bela Lugosi had a baby, that's Alice.

***Detroit Stories* paid tribute to your home city and where the band finally got its break.**

Bob [Ezrin] and I have done something like 15 albums together, and we're working on two more. We said, "Let's make a really good hard rock album, but where? The home of hard rock is Detroit, let's go there." And once we did, it was, "Let's make the record *about* Detroit. Not just hard rock but Motown and blues. Get [MC5's] Wayne Kramer on guitar."

Presumably you covered The Velvet Underground's Rock & Roll in tribute to Mitch Ryder's version.

Bob produced that version too. Lou [Reed] was an old friend, we both lived for a time at the Chelsea Hotel. The Velvets were kings of the underground and we were the young upstarts. Laurie Anderson heard our take and said Lou would have loved it.

Circa 1971, Lou Reed famously said, "Alice really doesn't make it as a drag queen, he's so ugly."

(Laughs) I was! I can totally imagine Lou saying that. I wasn't trying to be pretty. It was more, what *is* that? We'd come out on-stage, I'd be wearing ripped black tights and my girlfriend's slip, covered in blood. The audience is like, "What happened? How did he get covered with blood already?" It brought them right into the story, and then you never slowed it down.

Talking of slowing down, is there any sense of you taking stock with a view to retiring?

That word has never come up. I've never been in better shape. My beautiful wife [Sheryl] is in my show, as the Dead Bride and Madame Guillotine, so when I tour, I bring home with me. Our life is on that stage.

Tell us something you've never told an interviewer before.

The fact is, my dad was a pastor and my grandfather an evangelist, but I went as far away from the church as I could – but I returned. That's when I got sober. People ask, if I could change anything, would it be my addictions? I always answer no, because it's part of who I am now.

As told to Martin Aston

Alice tours the UK with The Cult from May 23 to June 1.

> "If Fred Astaire and Bela Lugosi had a baby, that's Alice."
> **ALICE COOPER**

COOPER-BOTTOMED

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5. **Love** *Stephanie Knows Who* (ELEKTRA, 1966)

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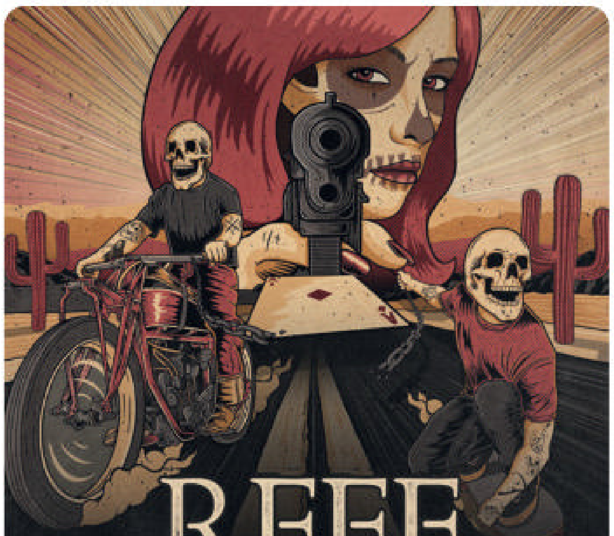

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SATURDAY 23
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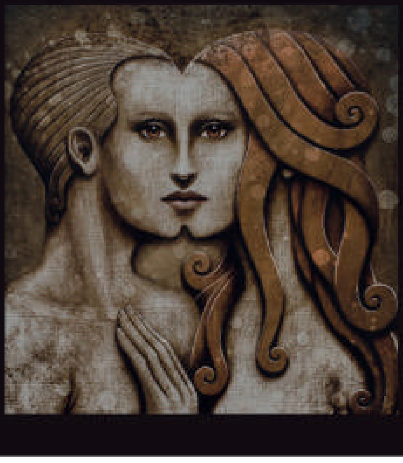

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"Unique, unworldly": Les Rallizes Dénudés' Takashi Mizutani with bassist Kiyohiro Takada (right), November 6, 1981, Hosei University Hall, Tokyo; (below right) Makoto Kubota.

© Gin Satoh

JAPAN'S UNKNOWABLE AVANT-ROCK ENIGMAS LES RALLIZES DÉNUDÉS BREAK COVER!

IN 2019, Tokyo musician/producer Makoto Kubota received a call from Takashi Mizutani, Les Rallizes Dénudés' mysterioso-in-black, a man whose extraordinary guitar-playing took up from where Hendrix's demolition of Wild Thing left off.

During the band's spasmodic lifetime, roughly 1967 to 1996, the 'Rallies', as he calls them, had appeared just once on record – an anachronistic, side-long howl of acid rock on a 1973 various artists album. In 1991, three Mizutani-authorised retro CDs, issued as grunge was breaking, spread the word. But by 2019, says Kubota, the band's bassist between 1969 and 1973, the Rallies had become "famous in a strange way". Some 100 LRD recordings, mostly live, were in circulation.

> **"Some words were very direct: 'We'll make love on the street!'"**
> **MAKOTO KUBOTA**

Mizutani was miffed. But after several conversations, including talk of re-forming the band for a US tour, the calls stopped. "I wasn't surprised," says Kubota. "He's that kind of guy." Then, a call from Mizutani's family in Kyoto. "They said he was gone."

Mizutani was always a spectral figure – visually, sonically and in his refusal to turn his gift into 'a career'. "He had a strong sense of beauty," says Kubota of the man with the hollowed-out cheeks à la Edvard Munch's The Scream. His lyrics, says Kubota, were "like avant-garde painting. But some words were very direct: 'We'll make love on the street!'"

Catalysed by psychedelia, radical theatre and Paris '68, early Les Rallizes Dénudés (that's corrupted French for 'Naked Suitcases') sometimes evoked Houston, Texas's Fever Tree or LA's Peanut Butter Conspiracy. Mostly, Mizutani was enthralled by fuzz, feedback and kiss-the-sky soloing. "I saw the first Rallies band and it was so loud," Kubota recalls.

Over time, the legend grew. The much-feted 'Japanoise' scene owes much to the group. The dazzling Keiji Haino could be Mizutani's double. But rumours that the band were 'a rock/terrorist organisation' – original bassist Moriaki Wakabayashi became a Red Army plane hijacker who ended up in North Korea – is misplaced. "Not political," says Kubota of his old colleague.

"He was a pioneer, a very disciplined guy who never compromised," Kubota continues. "All I knew about his family was that his father was an art dealer, a collector of scary paintings, like ghosts and horror stories. When he was young, he was surrounded by all kinds of strange art."

This rare insight into Mizutani's background might just begin to explain the 'terrible beauty' of so much of Les Rallizes Dénudés' music. Now, with Kubota currently sifting through cassettes, reel-to-reels, even DATs for future, family-sanctioned releases, Mizutani's work is destined for a wider audience. But what will that do to the myth? "I understand that, for some people, popularising the Rallies' name means it won't be hip any more," he says. "But Mizutani was not a maniac. He was a unique, unworldly person, that's all. If the world accepts him as he was, he'd love the idea."

Mark Paytress

The two-LP set The Oz Tapes (Temporal Drift) will be premiered on April 21, 2022 at Shibuya WWW X, Tokyo, with a live mix by Makoto Kubota, films, lights and photos. www.lesrallizesdenudes-official.com/www.makotokubota.org

KYOTO STORM WARNING

LRD in three lethal doses.

Studio Et Live '67-'69

(RIVISTA, 1991)

No 'Group Sounds' here. The fledgling Rallies hailed the 'rock revolution' with bell-ringing dream-psych (Soap Bubbles) and driving, Frisco-style folk rock (My Conviction) bookended with howls of ego-shredding electric storms.

Mizutani/Les Rallizes Dénudés

(RIVISTA, 1991)

Recorded in one all-night session in early 1970, this was Mizutani's attempt to turn a new leaf. "We played all the quiet songs," says Kubota, "then he started The Last One, hit the fuzz pedal and we were the loud Rallies again."

Live '77

(RIVISTA, 1991)

Includes the nearest thing to a Rallies anthem, Night Of The Assassins, built around the riff from Little Peggy March's I Will Follow Him. Pick of the bunch in '91 when Sonic Youth and MBV were flying.

LAST NIGHT A RECORD CHANGED MY LIFE

EXTENDED 12" VERSION

Keith Richards

The Rolling Stone kneels at the altar of *The Best Of Little Walter* (Chess, 1958).

LOOK, FUCKING favourites – it depends how you wake up in the morning. It could be Muddy Waters or fucking Mozart, hahaha! Let me throw this one out there – Little Walter Jacobs. If you look him up, you cannot go wrong, but I would suggest this album on Chess Records – available nowhere! It's got Blues With A Feeling on, and all the rest. I had that same album in the early '60s, black-and-white on the front, and he looks really *bad*.

The Chess guys were all individuals, and I would say that, as far as harp-playing goes, Walter was the Louis Armstrong of that damn thing. Mick [Jagger] is still in awe of him. We're both in agreement on that, and Mick is a damn good harp player himself! We kind of studied all this stuff to a certain extent at the beginning, along with Muddy Waters, Jimmy Reed, Slim Harpo, Eddie Taylor – I could go on.

Little Walter was an incredible singer, too. The feeling in his voice was unbelievable. The voice, man, the texture of the voice, and also the guitar players behind him, the Myers brothers, incredible stuff – let alone the sound of the studio, the texture of the sound.

We cut some tracks at Chess [in 1964-65, circa *The Rolling Stones No. 2*], and everything was done very simply, quite honestly. It was just like your little 2-track recording studio, with a little booth at the end, with a window. People will talk about the construction of the room, and I'm sure that studio people often don't even know if they've got it right or wrong. But sometimes you just walk into a room, and you go, "Yup!" Other rooms you walk into, you have to fight the fucker for weeks. Chess was one of those rooms that said, "Hell-oooo!", a room that resonates, and the minute you get in there and start playing, it's already responding.

You can try the Muddy Waters records that were made there as well, and the Chuck Berry records that were made in the same damn room. If you really want to get into it, that was *the* rock'n'roll room of all time, except maybe for Sun records down in Memphis, which was where the white boys hang.

Sadly, I never saw Little Walter perform. I would've loved to. [Pause] I'm doing my bit here – he's not paying me for this, you know? He's dead and gone! I'm just saying listen to the voice, listen to that band, and then you have an idea of what's really going on.

As told to Andrew Perry

Keith Richards' second solo album, 1992's Main Offender, is reissued on March 18 by BMG.

Keys to the highway: (right) the young Keith gets a feelin' for the blues in London in 1964; (above) Little Walter and friends at the Borough Assembly Hall, Aylesbury, the same year.

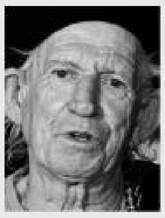
CHESS LP 1428
high-fidelity
THE BEST OF
LITTLE
WALTER

> "The Stones? All four limbs are working. It talks!"
> **KEEF**

Getty (2), Alamy

A STONE AGAIN OR

PLUS! Keith reveals what's next for the World's Greatest Rock & Roll Band.



I CAN GIVE you a little bit of Stones news, we're hitting Europe sometime next year, sometime in the year – probably summer. That's what we're aiming at, as long as the good Lord, hahaha, smiles upon us! It's a very hard thing to talk about, with Charlie [Watts, passing away last year], but Steve Jordan ending up with the Stones was like a full circle thing. Thank God it was Charlie's recommendation. You know, we've got a band going, and we still feel that it's got a continuity.

The album, we're still working on it. Mick and I are getting together in a couple of weeks, to figure it out. I don't know if we can make a record *and* do a tour, or if we just do the [writing] work, then do the tour and make a record after… it's too early in the year to say. But personally: all four limbs are working. It talks! Yeah, we're OK. Me? I'm sitting on a tropical island, I can see the ocean, and palm trees. I'm doing all right. I'm trying to see the winter out.

Don't cut her down: Molly Tuttle, in a tree of her own.

> **"Gillian Welch made the whole studio smell good!"**
> **MOLLY TUTTLE**

FROM SILICON VALLEY TO THE NASHVILLE MESS AROUND – MEET MOLLY TUTTLE, ROOTS PRODIGY

MOLLY TUTTLE, singer-songwriter, musical prodigy and a leading light of the newest wave of roots-Americana, is telling MOJO about a podcast she just recorded. "It's with Tim Armstrong of Rancid. I do have a soft spot for punk rock." She did a cover of Rancid's Olympia, WA on her last album. "But I heard so much old-time music and bluegrass growing up, I always knew I wanted to play it."

Tuttle, who lives in Nashville, was born and raised in suburban Palo Alto, south of San Francisco and deep in Silicon Valley. "I miss the California dreaming," she sings in San Francisco Blues on her new, third album, *Crooked Tree*. Hers was a musical home, "instruments everywhere". Her siblings all played too; father Jack Tuttle, a music teacher and performer, learned bluegrass as a child in rural Illinois from his banjo-playing father.

Molly's first instrument was the fiddle. "I saw my dad playing one and I really wanted to play, but after a couple of lessons I didn't have the discipline." She was four. At eight she started playing guitar – "a lot more fun" – and at 11 did her first gig with the family at a pizza parlour down the street, "bluegrass standards. I loved working out my guitar solos". At 13, she made her recording debut: a 2007 album of duets with her dad called *The Old Apple Tree*.

The title *Crooked Tree* came from something Tom Waits said: that crooked trees live longer than straight ones because lumberjacks don't want to cut them down. Tuttle's solo career might fit that description. "It has been kind of unusual," she says. After getting accolades for her 2019 full-length solo debut *When You're Ready* – a lovely album of original folk-Americana – she released a covers album, *But I'd Rather Be With You* (2020). As she points out, it was lockdown, with the studios closed and everything on hold, so she taught herself ProTools and came up with a home-made album of some favourite songs.

In 2017, as Tuttle was about to release her crowd-funded debut EP, the International Bluegrass Music Association named her Guitar Player Of The Year, the first woman to receive the award. Inarguably a virtuoso, her biggest influences, she says, are Tony Rice, Clarence White, and David Rawlings.

"[Rawlings is] really unique, with a really unusual guitar, and the way he plays it is emotional and captivating. I was interested in guitar players who found cool ways to accompany a vocalist, because I wanted to be able to accompany myself when I sing and not just strum all the time."

Rawlings' partner Gillian Welch guests on Tuttle's new album's cowgirl song, Side Saddle. "She came into the studio and sang and I remember she smelled really good. She made the whole studio smell good!" Tuttle laughs. "She seems like a very magical person." Other guests on the album include Margo Price, recent MOJO Rising star Billy Strings, and Tuttle's friends Old Crow Medicine Show. And, of course, singing with her on the closing song, Grass Valley, her father Jack.

Sylvie Simmons

Molly Tuttle & Golden Highway's Crooked Tree is out April 1 on Nonesuch.

FACT SHEET

- For fans of: Gillian Welch, Kacey Musgraves, Alison Krauss.
- Tuttle and Old Crow Medicine Show teamed up in 2020 to make a charity single for impoverished people affected by Covid: a cover of Neil Young's Helpless.
- In an interview with Vogue magazine, Tuttle discussed how she learned to live with alopecia.
- After winning the International Bluegrass Music Association Guitar Player award in 2017, Tuttle won it again a year later.

KEY TRACKS

- Side Saddle
- Dooley's Farm
- Nashville Mess Around

THE ROCK'N'ROLL GOSPEL OF SARAH BROWN, VIA STEVIE WONDER, ROXY MUSIC, PINK FLOYD AND SIMPLE MINDS

SINGING HAS been Sarah Brown's day job since she was spotted in the late '80s as part of London's Inspirational Gospel Choir. Then a teenager from Aylesbury, Bucks, Brown found herself on a career trajectory to match her skywards voice. To the disapproval of the choir master, she answered a call from producer Richard Niles to sing backing vocals for Stevie Wonder. "I *thought* I was going to meet him," she remembers, laughing. "But I did some 'bah-bah, oo-ahs' and that was it!"

Since that auspicious start, Brown has lent her voice to musicians including Simply Red, Roxy Music, Pink Floyd and, for the last 16 years, as part of Simple Minds' line-up. As her career took off, a long-term solo project, an album entitled *Sarah Brown Sings Mahalia Jackson*, would help keep Brown connected to her gospel roots.

> "I identify with Mahalia Jackson."
> **SARAH BROWN**

First started in 2007 when she recorded two tracks with Roxy pianist Colin Good, Brown's album revisits her childhood fondness for belting out Mahalia Jackson songs but from a fresh perspective: imagining Jackson outside of the confines of the church. "Mahalia had rock'n'roll in her," Brown contends. "When you watch her perform some of those early hymns, she's summoning this massive energy; there's blues in there, she's shaking her head, there's rhythmic stomping of the feet. It's very rock'n'roll."

Like Jackson, Brown's background was strictly gospel and often severe. "I identify with Mahalia," she agrees. "I was born in a volatile home. There was a lot of fear, and it was very strict." As such, Brown's subsequent career success feels like an act of liberation; a sense of freedom that she brings to her album, setting the songs against a contemporaneous musical backdrop of 1920s glamour: "The ragtime, the jazz and the early blues of Mahalia's teenage years," Brown explains, "when she might have been fantasising about being a singer."

The album stayed on the back burner until 2019, when the chance arose to spend two days recording at Abbey Road with Prince's engineer Hans-Martin Buff. The depth and polish achieved in that time bears testimony to her skill and an intuitive connection to both the material and Jackson, the gospel sensation recently seen in Questlove's film Summer Of Soul. The same film also featured a 19-year-old Stevie Wonder – the same age Sarah Brown was when her break came from Wonder.

Their paths finally crossed when Brown was with '90s funk group Incognito in LA. Stevie Wonder came backstage. "I said to him, You don't remember me, but I did BVs for you when I was really young." She grins. "And he said, 'You may not *think* I remember you, but I do.' And he made a big deal of it and pretended that I was the voice that made the track."

Jenny Bulley

Sarah Brown Sings Mahalia Jackson is out in June.

FACT SHEET
- In 1983 she sang lead with The Inspirational Choir Of The Pentecostal First Born Church Of The Living God on Madness single Wings Of A Dove.
- Brown joined Roxy Music's 2001 reunion tour. Both Jim Kerr and Simon Le Bon saw the show and offered her work.
- Raised in a house without secular music, initial calls from Kerr and Pink Floyd left her nonplussed ("I didn't recognise David Gilmour's name at all!"). She went on to sing on Pink Floyd's 2014 album *The Endless River*.
- The Abbey Road session features pianist Colin Good, organist Luke Smith, drummer Jerome Brown and upright bassist Tom Wheatley.

KEY TRACKS
- I'm On My Way
- Summertime
- Walk Over God's Heaven

Sarah Brown: keeping connected to her gospel roots.

Andrew Cotterill

MOJO PLAYLIST

Git down! With the month's finest soul-punk, jangle and Afro-choogle.

1 MICHAEL HEAD & THE RED ELASTIC BAND KISMET

Mick holds off his demons long enough to deliver a stirring shot of jangling, spangling throwback pop. More awaits on a Bill Ryder-Jones-produced LP, *Dear Scott*, due May.

Find it: *streaming services*

oumou sangaré

2 OUMOU SANGARÉ SARAMA

Wassoulou soul star backs irresistible new groove with characteristic self-assurance.

Find it: *YouTube*

3 CHRIS ROBINSON & HOWLIN RAIN SUCKER

Cosmic Cali rockers team up for a full-blooded, big-booted stomp through the Mott The Hoople chestnut.

Find it: *Bandcamp*

4 SUN'S SIGNATURE GOLDEN AIR

Liz Fraser presents her first record since 2009 this Record Store Day. Here's a suitably glimmer-flecked-yet-pulled-by-tides preview, recorded live at London's RFH in 2012.

Find it: *YouTube*

5 THE AFGHAN WHIGS I'LL MAKE YOU SEE GOD

Greg Dulli's Cincinnati soul-punks make dramatic comeback with hyperventilated guitar thrills to soundtrack a driving game.

Find it: *streaming services*

6 KEVIN MORBY THIS IS A PHOTOGRAPH

The Afro-chooglin' title track of the Kansas City Dylan's upcoming seventh solo album encapsulates its theme – how do our pasts shape us? – and bittersweet thrills. "This is what I'll miss about being alive," he exclaims.

Find it: *streaming services*

7 KEVIN RICHARD MARTIN FOREVER FALLING

From new long-player *Nightcrawler*, noir-jazz ambient-drift with double bass and saxes, played by replicants.

Find it: *Bandcamp*

GOOD GRIEF
SHAKE YOUR FAITH

8 GOOD GRIEF THE PONY REMARK

Liverpool's 'Hüsker Don't' play power-punk with pop nous, Socratic questioning and are-we-there-yet pep. From LP *Shake Your Faith*.

Find it: *Bandcamp*

9 ULLA HOPE SONATA

Philly dronester switches to guitar and sax for a 23-minute ambulation; like a late Lee Konitz side fragmented towards ambience.

Find it: *Bandcamp*

10 SCOTT LAVENE THE FIRST TIME

Mordant, spivvy, pop-punk TMI gabble about the urgency and futility of it all from lyrical Essex motormouth. See him live in London and Bristol this month!

Find it: *YouTube*

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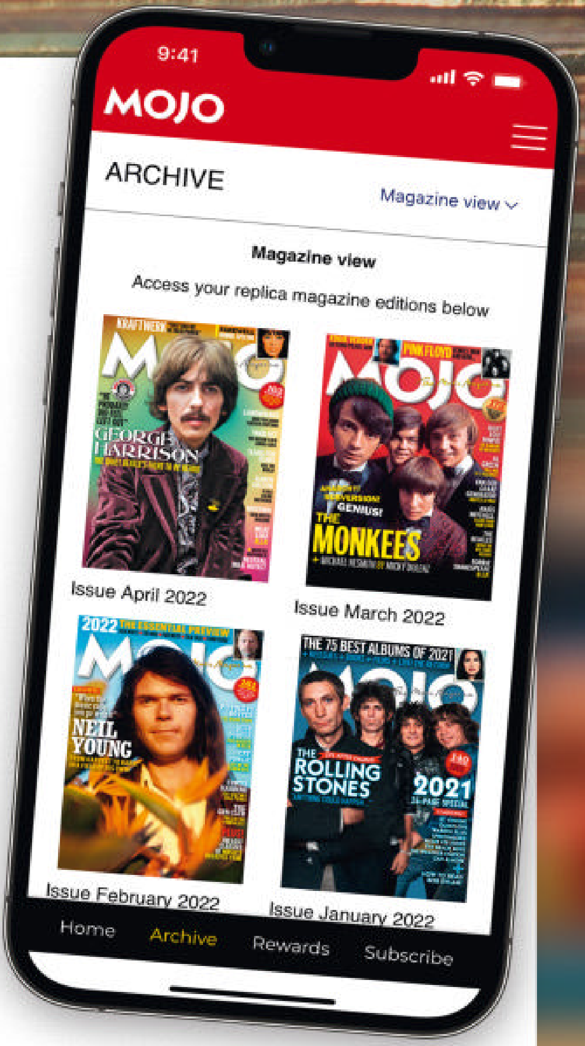
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JOHN MULVEY, EDITOR

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THE MOJO INTERVIEW

Broadway babe turned blues teen with a **bottle** on her **flipping-off** finger, she lived fast 'til **Prince** put her right. Now, at 72, she sees clearer than ever. "**John Lee Hooker** was so cool at this age," says **Bonnie Raitt**.

Interview by **BOB MEHR** • Portrait by **MARINA CHAVEZ**

ASK BONNIE RAITT ABOUT HER FIRST couple of albums – landmark records on many levels, not least for a white woman playing the blues – and she cringes.

"It sounds like I'm so young! I hated my voice. That's probably why I drank. I was trying to smoke and drink to get my voice lower."

At 72, looking back over a 50-year career, Raitt concedes that she grew into the role. On this afternoon, as late winter light streams through the windows of her northern California office, catching the corona of those famous red locks, she crackles with excitement as she reels off the current demands on her time: rehearsals for a first tour since 2019 and preparations for the release of her eighteenth album, *Just Like That*.

"It's been nonstop," she says. "When I get on the road I'll have a break."

Raitt was born in Los Angeles in 1949, the middle child of Broadway star John Raitt and pianist Marjorie Haydock, left-leaning Quakers who emphasised hard work and social responsibility over showbiz glitz. But rather than follow her family into musical theatre, Raitt found her passion in the blues, literally sitting at the feet of the old masters, Son House and Muddy Waters, Mance Lipscomb and Howlin' Wolf. When she scored a surprise deal with Warner Brothers at the age of 21, Raitt – a gifted singer and slide guitarist – used her platform to champion her mentors, among them rediscovered 1920s blueswoman Sippie Wallace and bottleneck guitar guru Fred McDowell.

"That was a privilege," she says today. "To be able to honour the people who hadn't been paid right or give them more exposure."

Real fame and success also found Raitt later, in her early forties, with the release of 1989's *Nick Of Time*. She was hoping at best for a modest comeback after a fallow decade marked by substance abuse, label woes and dwindling record sales. Instead, it sold five million copies and earned multiple Grammys. Raitt's 1991 follow-up, *Luck Of The Draw*, would outstrip it, selling 12 million copies worldwide. Her subsequent albums have set successive benchmarks in quality: top-end songs, mostly covers but many of her own, defined by Raitt's forthright singing and eloquent slide guitar playing.

While Raitt admits a desire to be one of the boys has led her down some darker paths, *Just Like That* will be accompanied by a long run of shows with Mavis Staples and Lucinda Williams. Informally, they're calling it the 'Mighty Tight Women Tour' after an old Sippie Wallace song.

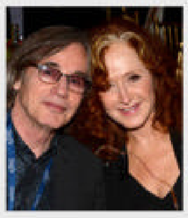
"To say that I'm ready to go is an understatement," enthuses Raitt, as she settles in to consider the unlikely journey that's brought her to this point. "I'm usually always pushing forward, but this feels like a good moment to look back."

You were brought up in a very musical environment. What are the first things that you remember hearing?

My dad was on Broadway at the time when I was little. My mom was his accompanist so there was a lot of warming up and rehearsing going on. My parents would listen to Ella Fitzgerald, Tony Bennett and Frank Sinatra records. And my grandfather was a Methodist minister – he played hymns on Hawaiian lap steel guitar. He ➢

WE'RE NOT WORTHY

Jackson Browne on the greatness of Raitt.



"I met Bonnie in 1971 and we became really fast friends – she was like Little Orphan Annie and Mae West combined! Plus, her integrity is striking. She does music for the best reasons, and she just keeps getting better and better. Her connectedness has become more powerful over time."

Marina Chavez,

showed me how to make the chords by just moving the bar across the neck, tuned in open tuning. I thought it was so cool.

Because of his Broadway fame, your father's influence is often cited. But your mother had a profound impact on you as well…

She was an incredibly facile and wide-ranging improvisational piano player. She did my dad's arrangements, chose a lot of his concert material. When he played with an orchestra she would conduct from the piano. She'd been an only child and was forced to take lessons and play piano. So she didn't want to make me take lessons. But she wasn't above playing Clair De Lune by Debussy or Slaughter On Tenth Avenue by Richard Rodgers or the Theme From Exodus as I was coming home from school. So I begged her to let me learn piano.

You eventually moved on to guitar – was it because you wanted to find your own musical identity?

As you become a pre-teen, your relationship with your mom has a little more pushback. And at that point I was such a Joan Baez fan – because she was Quaker, like me. I just romanticised her and folk music in general: Joan, Odetta, Pete Seeger. Also, I went to a summer camp on the East Coast, where folk music was a big part of the culture.

You essentially grew up in Hollywood but it doesn't sound like you lived a real Hollywood existence.

Even though my parents were both raised really poor, they didn't care about the trappings of show business or amassing great wealth. They had Quaker values and I really admired that in them. The coolest thing for us, was that they knew [crooner] Vic Damone (*laughs*). But [John Raitt's Broadway co-star] Doris Day was my hero. I had my hair cut just like her in The Pajama Game. She refused to cover up her freckles and I was so conscious about mine. But in general, my parents, they didn't drink or hang out, and they weren't hip. They didn't care about being hip. Plus, we lived on top of Coldwater Canyon. I didn't have any social life except my guitar and my dogs.

Your father might go years between big roles in Broadway hits like Carousel or The Pajama Game. Was that an early education in the vagaries of show business?

He toured 25 consecutive years doing summer stock – that's where he would make his living. He would play eight shows a week, travel on the one day off, block the show in the next place – sometimes in tents with no air conditioning. That informed my entire career. All I wanted to do was work steady on the road, like my dad did. I learned from him to treat every night like it's opening night, so they'll come back and see you.

You were a teenager when you first discovered the blues, through the *Blues At Newport* '63 LP.

I had never heard anything as wonderful as Mississippi John Hurt. I literally was, like, thunderstruck. That record was iconic as well because John Hammond and Dave Van Ronk were on it and they were white. I flipped the cover over and was like, "Look! You don't have to be 100 years old and black to do it!" I thought maybe I could play this music. So I taught myself to play every song on that record.

I stripped the label off a Coricidin [cough medicine] bottle and used that for a slide. Growing up with brothers, I wanted to be tough, I was a tomboy, so we'd flip the bird all the time. That's how I still hold the bottleneck, it's exactly the same: middle finger isolated. (*Laughs*) Later, when I met real blues musicians, they said, "No, no, it makes more sense to put it in on your ring finger or little finger so you have the other fingers free to play."

You eventually moved back East and attended college in Cambridge, majoring in African Studies at Harvard. What were you planning on doing?

I was going to work for the American Friends Service Committee, which is like the Peace Corps but more neutral, it wasn't sponsored by the government. All those African countries in the '60s threw off the yoke of colonialism. In Tanzania, [president] Julius Nyerere was cherry picking the best of social democracy from Sweden, and the best of entrepreneurship and capitalism from the West, and he was fashioning something that was brand new. America was so messed up and I just always loved Africa, so I thought it would be exciting to go there. The idea of forming brand new countries is what appealed to me.

But you met and began dating promoter Dick Waterman, a key figure in the 1960s blues revival, who looked after Son House and Mississippi Fred McDowell as well as Buddy Guy and Junior Wells.

Dick was working with all the blues guys and they would come and stay with him. Arthur Crudup would come or Robert Pete Williams, or Mississippi Fred, and we'd meet them at the train station or at the airport and put them up and I'd get to go hang out at gigs. It was unbelievable. I would go to these incredible festivals and get to see Sleepy John Estes and Mance Lipscomb and Lightnin' Hopkins, who'd never met each other, hang out. I mean, just to witness Son House as a human… Son was dignified, as well as an alcoholic. I got a lot of life lessons.

You had a close association with Sippie Wallace. She would have known everything about being a woman in a bluesman's world.

I really learned a lot from Sippie about that. She was never bent out of shape by stuff. Of course, when I was around her, she was being feted and people were coming up and saying

A LIFE IN PICTURES

Special Raitt: Bonnie down the years.

1 Eight-year-old Bonnie Raitt with brothers David and Steven, and father John at the helm, April 26, 1958.

2 Raitt in 1972, circa second album *Give It Up*.

3 Blues buddies: Raitt and Keith Richards in Toronto during The Rolling Stones' Voodoo Lounge tour, 1994.

4 The slider: Bonnie giving it some middle finger, London Hammersmith Odeon, August 6, 1977.

5 In the mood: Raitt with John Lee Hooker, 1990.

6 The time of her life: Raitt at the Shrine Auditorium, Los Angeles, with two of the four Grammys she took home on February 21, 1990, including the award for Best Album.

7 Endless flight: Raitt with John Prine, author of her signature song Angel From Montgomery, on-stage in Los Angeles, 1993.

8 Kindred spirits: Raitt with her childhood idol (and fellow Quaker of Scots ancestry) Joan Baez, at the We The Planet Festival in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, April 20, 2003.

9 "I'm proud to be a role model": Bonnie Raitt, 'badass blues mama', at the Greek Theatre, Berkeley, September 3, 1977.

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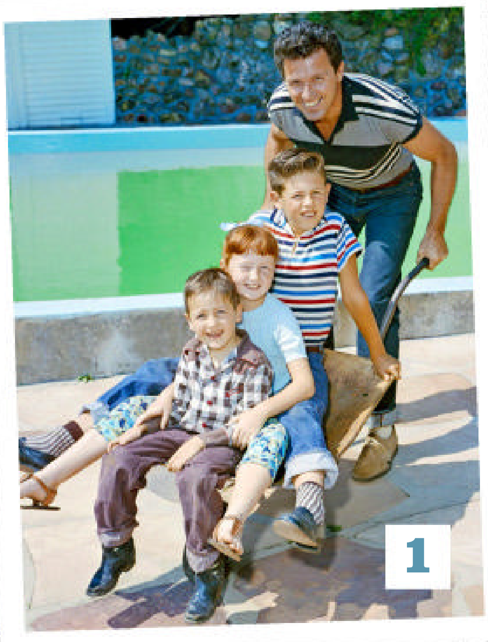
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Getty (8), Greg Allen

how much they loved her. Can you imagine for all those blues people who were ignored or retired and forgotten for so long, to be brought out like that and lifted up like that? It was fantastic.

You toured with The Rolling Stones in 1970 – how did that come about?

I was on my [summer] break from college and working as my dad's dresser in a production of Zorba The Greek in San Francisco for a month. Buddy Guy and Junior Wells were opening for the Stones in Europe and Waterman called me and said, "Hey, there's room for one more – you want to go?" And I went, "Excuse me? Yeah!"

I remember we were in Sweden or somewhere and somebody brought Buddy a National steel guitar. Buddy didn't play slide, but I had my picks and my bottleneck with me. And Dick said, "Here, try this" – and I tuned it open tuning. I'm playing backstage in the arena, and after a while I look up from my guitar and see these pointy-toed lizard skin boots in front of me. Keith, and I think Mick too, had come around the corner, wondering, "Who's playing that?" My stock went way up after that.

That tour proved fairly pivotal for you.

They actually extended the tour and so I missed my registration back at school! (*Laughs*) If I wasn't going back to college my parents said I had to support myself. That's when I decided to start playing [professionally]. I auditioned for a little folk club, and then Dick put me on a show with Cat Stevens. I got to open for John Hammond and Chris Smither and Fred McDowell. Little by little, I built up my following. It still wasn't really a career. I had every intention of going back to school.

All of this snowballed into a record deal…

I had a really good lawyer, Nat Weiss. He was Brian Epstein's American counterpart, represented The Beatles in the United States, and worked with Peter Asher and James Taylor. I think he made some phone calls, 'cos I played The Gaslight and there was a Columbia Records scout and a Warner Brothers scout and each saw the other guy was there. So Nat drummed up a [competition], and then he negotiated me a deal with Warner that was ridiculous – he got me complete artistic control.

> "I had never heard **anything as wonderful as Mississippi John Hurt**. I literally was, like, **thunderstruck**."

Your early albums, 1971's *Bonnie Raitt* and 1972's *Give It Up*, featured wide-ranging covers – Robert Johnson to Jackson Browne – overlaid with your evocative slide playing.

I love playing Fred McDowell songs, and Robert Johnson songs, but my slide style is probably more like Ry Cooder or Lowell George. It's more languid, more like a human voice. It's all about tone and hanging the note in the right place. What was maybe different about me was my choice of songs and how I put them together. It's the mix of this rocker and this blues song with that ballad, or this jazzy thing. I don't do it deliberately; it's just my taste is broad. I put the slide on songs that you wouldn't normally think would have slide. But I don't try and overuse it. It's kind of like BBQ sauce – you don't want to put it on everything.

You returned to Los Angeles around 1973, to make your third album, *Takin' My Time*. What brought you back?

I wanted to make a record with Lowell George and Little Feat. Lowell and I were involved. I didn't know he was married at the time – I've said that publicly. So has Linda Ronstadt [who also had a relationship with George]. Like Taj Mahal's first two albums, what Little Feat were doing with the kind of roots music I loved was so thrilling to me. I started doing the album with Lowell and then [Orleans singer] John Hall and Taj came and helped me finish it.

I really loved being back in Los Angeles at 23, where I could finally drive and be Queen of the Hop. It was a killer time to be young and single and have a record deal and be a burgeoning rock star. I am not gonna lie. I did six albums in seven years, and I stayed on the road all the time. I look back now and I go, "How the heck did I do that?"

One of the writers you have a deep connection with is the late John Prine, who penned what's considered your signature, Angel From Montgomery. That's an anthem for women stuck in unhappy marriages and emotionally crippling domestic situations. But your own life in the '70s was the opposite of that.

I wasn't even thinking about ever having to settle down. I was a career woman first and I was having a blast. And I had sequentially monogamous relationships – seven years here, four years there – but no interest in getting married or having a family. I just had too much respect for what it would take to raise a child. I wasn't successful enough to come off the ➢

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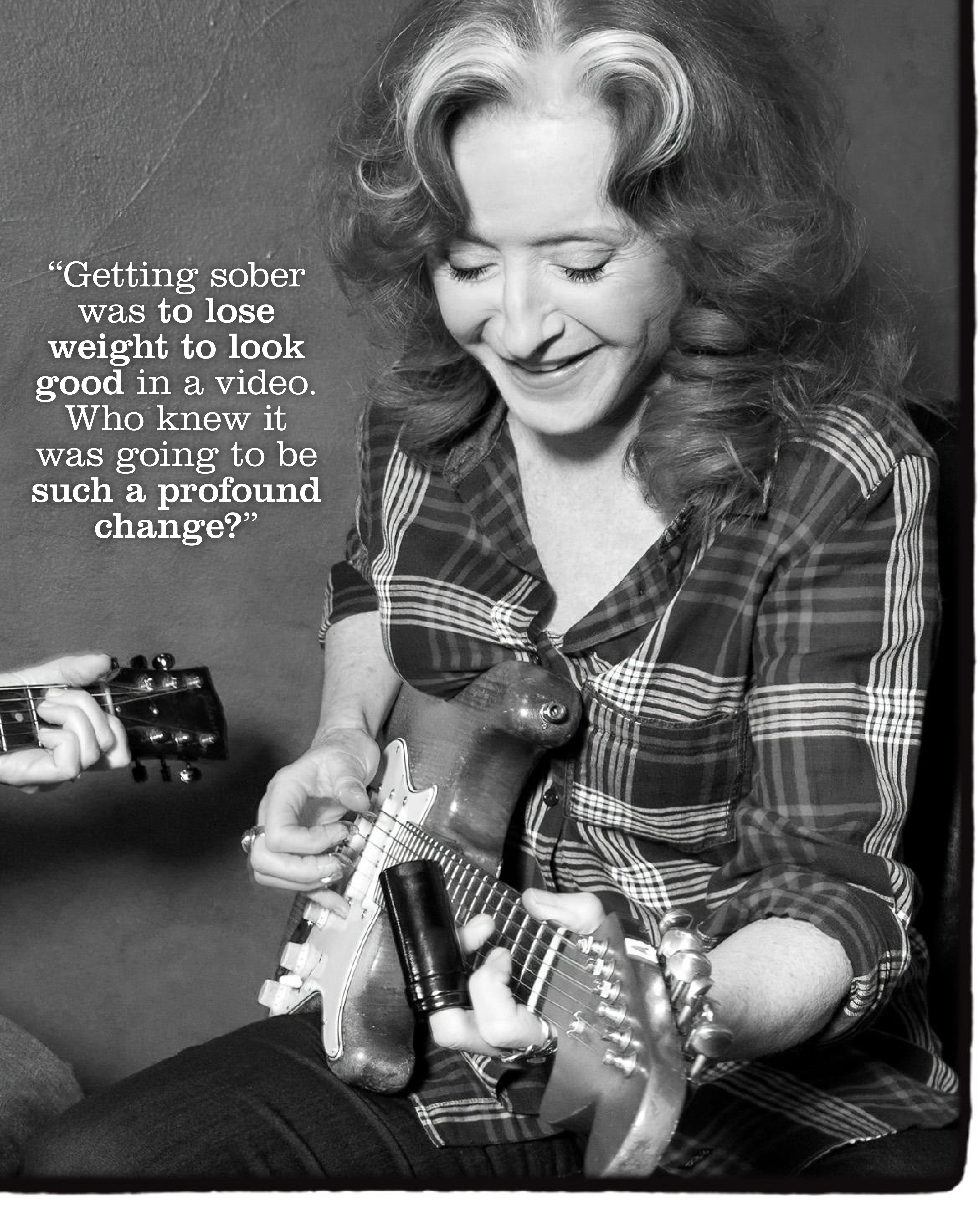


"Getting sober was **to lose weight to look good** in a video. Who knew it was going to be **such a profound change?**"

road and have a kid. I made my living from touring, not from selling records or writing songs. I never had the calling either.

And yet you sing Angel From Montgomery with such empathy.

When I heard John's song I thought about that whole generation of women that stayed in marriages whether they really wanted to or not. It's such a perfect portrait of what it's like to be in a relationship that's not fulfilling. Every time I sang it I had tremendous empathy for the women who had to make those choices, between family and career, and for the opportunities lost. I sing it for women, I sing it for our place, and it's changed over the decades depending on where I'm at. I sang it for my mom for years.

You say there are a couple of story songs on the new album that are inspired by John Prine's writing. It's remarkable to think he came up with Angel when he was so young, and while delivering the mail.

It's unbelievable. He's even more precious now than when he was alive and I couldn't have loved him more. We just loved each other so much. His passing is just the greatest tragedy. I loved Toots [Hibbert] too – we were really close and we were supposed to do a duet of a song of his on my new record. I know they say it's this time of life, but Covid has added to it, robbed us of so many wonderful people.

By the early 1980s, after almost a decade recording for the label, things began to

sour between you and Warner Brothers…

That really started [in 1978] after they matched [CBS Records head] Walter Yetnikoff's offer to get me to come to Columbia. Warners, who had kind of ignored me, didn't want to be embarrassed like they had been with James Taylor – who'd moved to Columbia and had the biggest record of his career. So they matched Walter's offer, which he'd written on a cocktail napkin. But then they didn't promote me. I had artistic control, but if you don't do the record they want then they can just not put the records in the stores. I mean, I used to go into the Warner building and people would duck when they saw me because they felt bad. It wasn't the same company by then. It was no longer the family label. But I didn't really make commercial records either, so there you go.

You hit a bad patch in the mid '80s, personally and professionally, and with substance abuse.

I was always very high functioning. I would never jeopardise my gigs. But I was on the road so much, I was relying too much on drinking and drugs. It affected me physically. I got really heavy. I had a break-up in my relationship. I got dropped by Warner Brothers. It was a rough time.

It was Prince who inadvertently helped motivate you to get clean?

Prince called and said, "The way Warners has treated you is terrible. Come over here, we'll make a record together." The turning point was knowing I might have to make a video with Prince. My fans probably don't care if I'm fat or not. But I wanted to make a sexy record with him and I knew it wasn't going to work in a video if I was looking like pork pie over here (*laughs*). Initially, getting sober was a career move to lose some weight to look good in a video. Who knew it was going to be such a profound change?

And that was compounded by the fact that you were forced off the road after you hurt your hand?

You can't go to AA if you're not home, and I was always on the road. The accident made me have to stay in a cast and not play for two months. So I didn't have any more excuses. I attended this musician's [AA] meeting and went, "Wow, these guys are having a blast." It's not like some Moonie, Christian cult thing where you have to sign over to Jesus. Within about three days, I heard my own story over and over again. And I saw people that had looked like shit for years, suddenly look like they had gotten their blood changed (*laughs*). They were in shape, they lost weight, they were playing great.

But, even so, you weren't totally convinced you were going to stay sober.

I felt like I still gotta hold up the candle for the badass blues mamas – what kind of artist would I be if I were completely happy and straight? But then Stevie Ray Vaughan came out of rehab in Atlanta when I was playing a gig there and he sat in with us. And it was the first gig he played after rehab and he just burned a hole in the set. And I went, "That's it. I want that." Stevie Ray was instrumental, so was John Hiatt, [longtime Raitt keyboardist] Mike Finnigan and the guys in Little Feat, Paul Barrere in particular. They led me to sobriety. I could see it. They say it's a programme of attraction not evangelism. I just said, "I want what they have."

Marina Chavez

The proposed project with Prince never came out, but you did end up doing some work with him, didn't you?

When I got [to Paisley Park] he played three songs and I went, "Hey man, thanks a lot but this is like five keys too low for me." I still tried to sing them. But one of the lyrics was, "You mess around all over town, honey/But we're still cool because there's something I like about being your fool". I said, "No way! No fucking way would I sing that." (*Laughs*) I don't think they were really written for me.

Another critical moment was when you worked on the [1988] Hal Willner-produced Disney tribute album, *Stay Awake*, where you connected with your future *Nick Of Time* producer Don Was.

Hal inviting me to sing with Was (Not Was) – that was a spark of great inspiration. Bonnie Raitt and Was (Not Was) doing Baby Mine from Dumbo – who in their right mind would have thought of that? That was important for me at that time. The esteem with which I was continuing to be held within the musicians' community saved my ass, really.

HIGHLY RAITT-ED

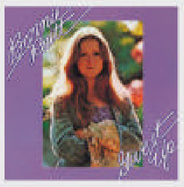
Three Bonnie beauts across six decades. By **Bob Mehr**.

FINDING THE FORMULA

Give It Up

★★★★

(WARNER BROS., 1972)



After her downhome folk-blues debut, Raitt would solidify her musical mélange on her second, a record that twines R&B grit with canny pop nous. Raitt showcases a broad range and sharp instincts, serving up New Orleans funk (Barbara George's I Know), smouldering blues (Chris Smither's Love Me Like A Man) and supple balladry (the Eric Kaz/Libby Titus weeper Love Has No Pride) on an album that would serve as a stylistic blueprint.

MUSIC FOR THE MASSES

Luck Of The Draw

★★★★

(CAPITOL, 1991)

Buoyed by the momentum of her career-making *Nick Of Time*, a reassured Raitt returned with an even more refined soul-pop platter, delivering irresistible grooves and hooks across a dozen tracks. Highlighted by the playful R&B of Something To Talk About and the heartrending lament I Can't Make You Love Me, the album is somewhat coloured by its early-'90s production tics, but remains the platonic ideal of Raitt's radio-ready roots'n'roll.

STILL GOING STRONG

Slipstream

★★★★

(REDWING, 2012)

A recent classic on which Raitt's mature voice becomes an even more expressive instrument, offering moving renditions of Dylan's *Time Out Of Mind* twosome Million Miles and Standing In The Doorway, while giving reggae flair to Gerry Rafferty's Right Down The Line. Perhaps the most fully realised record since her '90s chart peak – credit to co-producer Joe Henry – it brought her a Grammy for best Americana album, her tenth overall so far.

So, then you sign with Capitol and you finally have a breakthrough hit with *Nick Of Time*. Why do you think that one connected with such a big audience?

Well, [the Raitt-penned] Nick Of Time was a different kind of song. It was looking at that baby boomer generation ageing and what that was like. Also, VH1 appeared around then, at a time when MTV would not have played me. I was nervous about making a video [for the single Thing Called Love] at age 40, so I asked Dennis Quaid to play my boyfriend so I could flirt with him on camera and present, on purpose, a kind of sexuality that didn't involve unbuttoning five buttons on my shirt. That wasn't going to work for me because I was an older person and not that foxy. The foxiness happened in that chemistry. And VH1 played it because of Dennis Quaid.

But the biggest reason of all was my sobriety and having a new record company that gave a shit. Joe Smith and a lot of the Warner people came over to Capitol and were really behind me. And I did tons of press. Even before I got nominated for a Grammy, it had sold a million copies. It was just the right place at the right time for me and that record.

The 1990 Grammys became a coming out party for you, where you won four awards and turned into this incredible feel-good story. Do you think it was almost a blessing that success came to you later?

If it had happened earlier it would've totally derailed me. I wouldn't have wanted that pressure. That's ultimately why I moved out of LA; I can't handle the showbiz thing. Or even Nashville – it's always, "Are you writing? Are you writing?" And it's like, "No, I'm hiking, I'm living." I got that from my parents, too.

You're considered to be one of the iconic female guitarists. Do you feel there's been progress made in recent years in terms of how women are viewed as musicians?

There's a number of great women guitarists and musicians – there always has been. I think Shawn Colvin and Joni Mitchell are two of the greatest guitar players I know but they don't get as much credit for that. Prince and Beyoncé have had all-women bands. People like Susan Tedeschi and St. Vincent are fantastic avatars for women kicking ass on the guitar. More and more women are playing all kinds of instruments. And I'm proud to be a role model for slide guitar. But women as engineers and producers and in executive positions in the business, that's where we're still lagging behind.

You're 72 – roughly the same age as Sippie Wallace, Fred McDowell and your blues heroes when you met them as a teenager…

That's frightening! (*Laughs*) Actually, people like Sippie, Fred and John Lee Hooker were so cool at this age. They were just wise and funny and balanced. That's how I feel about Mavis Staples too – she is a huge influence on me, how she inhabits her spiritual life. That is my dream, to be like that. To approach the next 20 years of my life with that kind of gumption and sass and fun and to not worry. Of course, you look around and there's the pandemic, George Floyd, democracy being threatened and the climate. This is the scariest, the most depressing time of my life. But I'm grateful that I have the emotional balance and security to take it on.

That's why I'm so excited to get back on the road. For me, going out on that stage is the most life-affirming, fun, rejuvenating thing you can do. Not being able to tour, when you take that away – I watched what it did to my dad. It was heartbreaking. But when he had a gig it was like, Oh my God – there he goes again! There was no arthritis, no pain, nothing but joy. You know, George Burns said he couldn't die because he was booked. Well, I hope I'm booked until I drop.

THE BON

Matix
Cypress Hill
SOUTHPOLE
RECOR

G SHOW†:

THIRTY YEARS A RECORDING CONCERN, CYPRESS HILL'S STONER SAMPLEDELIA HAS SURVIVED MORE THAN CHANGING TRENDS IN RAP – TRY A BULLET IN THE BACK. SO WHAT'S KEPT THIS BROTHERHOOD TOGETHER – ALTHOUGH SOMETIMES ONLY BARELY – AND IN THE GAME? "WE'RE MORE THAN JUST A HIP-HOP BAND," THEY TELL ANDY COWAN.

PHOTOGRAPH: PIERS ALLARDYCE

THE STREET LOOKED LIKE COUNTLESS OTHER STREETS IN South Central Los Angeles – towering palm trees, picket fences, grids of wooden bungalows – but Louis Freese knew different. It was a dividing line: the border between safety and the opposite. The 17-year-old knew this because he'd crossed it before: as an apprentice with the Family Swan chapter of the Bloods, his initiation had been to spray-paint his crew's names on a wall in Crips territory. And he knew the risks: "If you get caught, you're fucked."

Today his set were headed to a friend's house to score weed, but their friend lived in the danger zone. "Normally we would take a gun on a walk like this because of the close borderline," says Freese – now best known as Cypress Hill rapper B-Real. "But we didn't. We went out, as they call it, 'slippin'' and walked up on this corner. A car pulled up. There's three guys in it, they all got blue hats, we all have red…"

The car window rolled down and a rifle barrel appeared. As Freese and his fellow Bloods scattered, a shot popped off, catching one of them in the arm. Then the gun swivelled in the direction of Freese.

"I'm running alongside this wall and this guy takes four shots. Three bounce behind me but the fourth ricochets a little bit ahead, bounces off the wall, penetrates my back…"

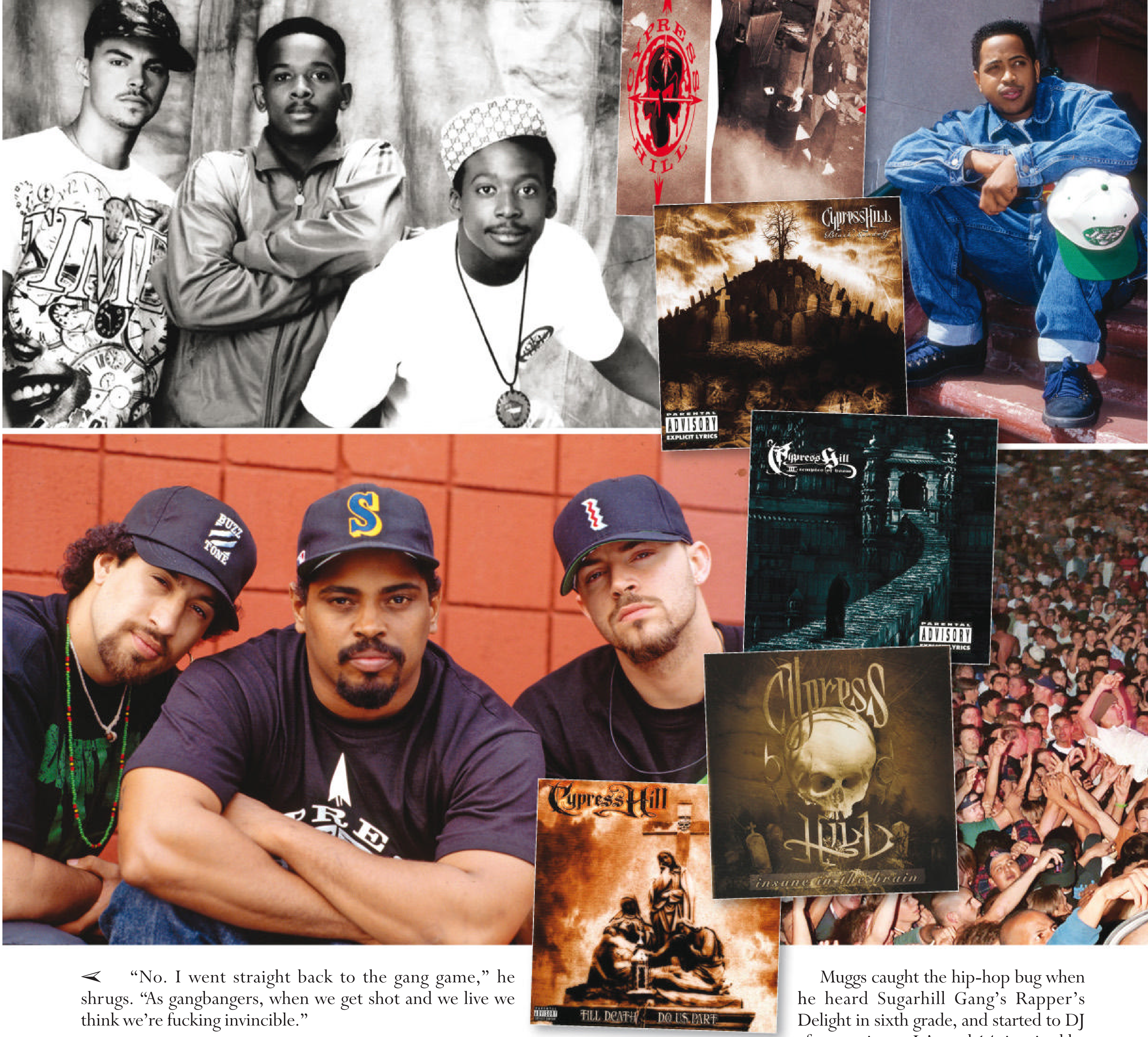
Freese staggered from the scene. Later, he would learn the bullet had punctured his left lung.

"I got as far as I could on that one lung," he recalls. "Dipped into this hallway by these apartments on the corner. Looked up, the car was gone. I lost my breath and fell to the ground."

At nearby Lynwood's Martin Luther King Jr Hospital (nicknamed 'Killer King' for the deadly mishaps of its rookie doctors), it was found the .22 hollow point bullet had fractured into three pieces, two near Freese's heart and spine. Doctors successfully removed the other fragment and blood from his lung. Hooked up to breathing apparatus, Freese survived. Was it a wake-up call? ➢

Kings of the Cypress Hill: (from left) B-Real, DJ Muggs, Sen Dog and Eric Bobo, Brixton Academy, London, 1998.

© Alpha Press



Getty (3), Michael Miller/Sony Music

< "No. I went straight back to the gang game," he shrugs. "As gangbangers, when we get shot and we live we think we're fucking invincible."

IN MAJORITY-HISPANIC-AMERICAN SOUTH GATE, Los Angeles in 1988, there were two games: gangs and hip-hop, and the two crossed over. Between run-ins with the Crips, B-Real was already rapping . So was another gang-affiliated Latino, Cuba-born Senen Reyes, AKA Sen Dog. In 2021, the pair celebrated 30 years as recording artists Cypress Hill, one of the most musically creative and internationally embraced rap acts of all time. Today, B-Real speaks to MOJO just hours before a show in Cancun, Mexico. But in 1988, it was hard to see beyond the street.

"Me and a couple of homies used to hang out with Sen Dog," remembers B-Real. "We were constantly trying to impress him – showing him that we were tough kids, but we were loudmouths more than anything. One day he pulled me to the side and said, 'So you think you're fuckin' tough? Come hang out with these guys and see if you're tough. 'Cos all the shit you're doing is bullshit.'"

As gang life entangled Sen Dog and B-Real, the hip-hop world was opening up for the pair's school friend Lawrence Muggerud. Born in Queens, New York of Italian stock (his opera-loving grandparents came from Naples), he was exposed to Led Zeppelin, Cream, Jimi Hendrix and The Who while sharing a bedroom with his young rock fan uncle. "There were velvet posters and black lights in my room," he tells MOJO today, "lava lamps, incense, beads, 8-track tapes on the wall. I remember the smell too, although I didn't know it was weed then…"

Muggs caught the hip-hop bug when he heard Sugarhill Gang's Rapper's Delight in sixth grade, and started to DJ after moving to LA aged 14, inspired by local DJs he saw playing techno-hop, an electro hybrid. Some of B-Real's earliest rap attempts were backed by Muggs, although the more promising project comprised Sen Dog and his younger brother Ulpiano, AKA Mellow Man Ace. As DVX (Devastating Vocal Excellence) the brothers aped Run-DMC's tag team back-and-forth over Muggs's hard-edged East Coast beats. But it was a hook-up with fellow New York transplants, Geffen-signed duo The 7A3, that proved pivotal. At a party in Lynwood, when their DJ failed to show, Muggs stepped behind the decks and into the band.

Witnessing production visionaries Hank Shocklee (Bomb Squad), Daddy-O (Stetsasonic) and Joe 'The Butcher' Nicolo at work on The 7A3's 1988 debut *Coolin' In Cali* stoked a fire in the bullish, no-nonsense music-maker. "I liked the record but I didn't *love* the record," says Muggs. "I was mad, I was like, I wanted that shit to come out like *this*. Fuck! So I bought a drum machine and I started making beats."

Stadium tours supporting Salt-N-Pepa, MC Hammer and N.W.A followed, while a deal with Russell Simmons's Rush Management opened Muggs's eyes to the marketing machinery behind rap's biggest stars: "That was the first time I heard, 'What's your concept? What's your logo?'"

Muggs brought some of that hustle back to the old neighbourhood. Selling the strengths of Mellow Man Ace to Delicious Vinyl, he told the LA label his friend rapped in Spanish and saw "the dollar signs in their eyes" (in reality, Sen was the fluent bilingual rapper).

“THREE BULLETS BOUNCE BEHIND ME BUT THE FOURTH BOUNCES OFF THE WALL, PENETRATES MY BACK.” B-REAL

Hill communication: (clockwise from top left) DJ Muggs (far left) with brothers Brett and Sean Bouldin in The 7A3, 1988; Cypress Hill’s first three LPs, 1993 single Insane In The Brain and 2004 album *Till Death Do Us Part*; Sen Dog’s brother Mellow Man Ace, New York, 1992; “Need a light?” Sen Dog, Muggs and B-Real go for a ride; Sen performing How I Could Just Kill A Man with Rage Against The Machine, Carson, LA, 1994; if the cap fits… B-Real, Sen Dog and DJ Muggs in 1992.

But the relationship between Ace and Muggs soured when Ace scored a novelty hit with 1987’s Mentirosa. “He kind of shit on everybody,” says Muggs disdainfully, “started wearing suits.”

His brother’s success impacted differently on Sen. “I was in a gang fight,” he recalls from his home in Nevada. “The cops showed up, put everybody on their knees, hands behind their heads. The main cop singled me out. He said, ‘Is it true your brother’s some big-time rap star?’ I went, Yeah. He goes, ‘And this is what the fuck *you* do?’ It was a slap in the face. I made a decision right there to make something of myself.”

That something involved Muggs and, ideally, B-Real, but the latter needed persuading that music was a worthwhile pursuit.

“I kept telling them, It’s a waste of my fucking time,” recalls B-Real. “I was so indoctrinated. I don’t know what they said but one day I went, Fuck it, I’ll check it out. Once I started writing again, it gave me a different fire. I found myself wanting to be there rather than on the street corner slanging.”

THE NASCENT CYPRESS HILL HAD AN ACE IN THE hole. In his bedroom studio, the workaholic Muggs had been working tirelessly towards a signature sound, combining the *de rigueur* James Brown drum loops with stacks of under-the-radar samples: Albert King, Muddy Waters, Elephant’s Memory, Ingrid, Mighty Tom Cats…

“I had limited sampling time ’cos the [E-mu] SP-1200 [sampler] only had 10 seconds,” he explains. “So I would play all these short sounds and make rhythms out of them. I didn’t have a lot of records so it forced me to be more creative with what I did have.”

But while Muggs’s beats were maturing, issues emerged in the vocal department. B-Real’s rhymes were tightly written but his voice was not cutting through. “He had a natural nasal voice but he was trying to rap deep ’cos Chuck D, Big Daddy Kane and Rakim all had a deep voice – that was the sound,” says Muggs. “It wasn’t right.”

The trio were recording a demo for the song Real Estate when B-Real tried a fresh tack, partially inspired by the high-pitched squeak of NYC hip-hop pioneer Rammellzee. “The hairs on my arms went up,” says Muggs. “All of a sudden we had found the code.” Sen’s memory is equally vivid: “We were looking at each other like, ‘Oh my god! There it is, *right* there.’”

For B-Real, his cartoonish contrast to Sen’s macho baritone was an inversion of the dynamic between Public Enemy’s Chuck D and Flavor Flav. “We looked at it as if we were Public Enemy inside out. They were a big influence on how we threw shit back and forth. The thought was to have my vocal as the lead, Sen as back-up – totally a reversal of what Public Enemy do – and it worked.”

Signed to Columbia joint venture Ruffhouse Records, and issued to little fanfare in the summer of 1991, Cypress Hill’s self-titled debut accentuated their vocal contrasts, the world’s first Latin hip-hop group freely mixing Spanish and English as B-Real’s vivid lyrics evoked their gang-controlled locales and Sen’s gruff menace hammered them home. Muggs’s trippy beats only added to the sinister vibes, whether summoning a whole bassline from the intro to Gene Chandler’s Duke Of Earl for Hand On The Pump, or combining a loping breakbeat from bluesman Lowell Fulson with a screaming Hendrix guitar loop on How I Could Just Kill A Man. And then there was the stoner element – B-Real nailing his and Sen’s incoming status as hip-hop’s Cheech & Chong over a hazy sample from an obscure Bill Cosby song on Stoned Is The Way Of The Walk.

“That album was our whole lives up until that point,” says Muggs. “Y’know, it’s easy to put a record out. But to put a record out and be *original*? Where I come from, you had to be original or you were wack. They’d push your needles off the record if you were a wack DJ, sock you in the fucking head.”

FOR ALL ITS ORIGINALITY, *CYPRESS HILL* BARELY dented the US charts, the trio taking any live dates and support slots they could to kickstart momentum. The mood changed when New York DJs embraced How I Could… and sent it to the top of Billboard’s Hot Rap Tracks chart. Used in the climactic scene of Tupac Shakur’s breakthrough movie Juice, it propelled them to the second stage of 1992’s Lollapalooza, where watching Ice Cube command the main stage woke the band to their own live potential.

Hooked off the road to record follow-up *Black Sunday* – largely written by B-Real and Muggs in the latter’s rented flat in Flushing, New York on a marijuana and magic mushrooms bender – its shrill squawks and noisier backdrops doubled down on their debut’s darkness and underlined their unapologetic stoner credentials on I Wanna Get High and Insane In The Brain, the song Sen says took them “to another hemisphere”. The album went straight to Number 1 in the US, snaring a rock demographic along the way.

“We had a rock’n’roll energy,” says Muggs. “All the rap stuff I ➢

⋖ was a fan of – Run-DMC, Public Enemy, LL Cool J, Beastie Boys – was produced by Rick Rubin, it had that energy. I wasn't into jazz, none of that jazzy hip-hop – I like hard shit you can do push-ups to."

"When you listen to Cypress Hill you get a sense of our musical upbringing," agrees Sen Dog. "We're more than *just* a hip-hop band."

Their iconography didn't hurt. Loosely inspired by the cover of Ministry's *Psalm 69*, the sepia-tinted skulls and snow-capped gravestones of *Black Sunday*'s artwork added to the murky alternative-rock associations.

"We never put our faces on the cover, we made it obscure like Black Sabbath records," says B-Real. "We converted a lot of people that weren't hip-hop fans. Our shows weren't like a normal hip-hop show either, they were more like a punk rock show with the stage-diving, mosh-pitting and crowd-surfing. I think people appreciated our don't-give-a-fuck attitude. That combination lent our music to kids in the ghetto, the suburbs and everywhere else."

But it was the self-styled 'Stoned Raiders' pro-marijuana stance – something sincere rather than gimmicky – that proved key. "You didn't have to be from the 'hood to relate to it," says B-Real, both a leading legalisation advocate and Dr Greenthumb dispensaries proprietor. "We were in this genre that had been treated like a stepchild up to this point and talking about cannabis – it wasn't easy. We smoked cannabis, we consumed it, but we also thought it should be legal so we decided to take a stance."

This was upfront on *Black Sunday*'s sound collage, Legalize It, and its inner sleeve's list of 19 cannabis facts (eg. "One acre of hemp will produce as much paper as four acres of trees"). "We didn't know it would make us the poster boys for cannabis and hip-hop," continues B-Real, "but it opened up the genre for other artists to talk about it. It was an organic evolution."

BY THE TIME THE IMMACULATELY MANICURED horrorcore of *III: Temples Of Boom* emerged on Halloween in 1995, Cypress Hill were bona fide rap/rock crossover superstars, headlining Lollapalooza's main stage in front of a giant hydraulic Buddha and ten-foot hash pipe that belched smoke. Arguably the biggest hip-hop act globally and one of the world's biggest bands full stop, fame impacted on their ranks in different ways.

"You gotta think, we were always the lower middle-class kids on food stamps, and welfare," says Muggs. "We always had food to eat in my house and we got Christmas presents, but we had no money for nothing else. So fame and money, this whole shit, was shocking to us. We're travelling the world, going a thousand miles an hour, and millionaires at 21 years old. What the fuck is that? I don't think my mom made more than $25,000 a year her whole life.

"We didn't care about fame or money. We thought we'd sell about 100,000 records like Ultramagnetic MC's or KRS-One. I was like, Fuck, if I sell that and have respect like they do, I'm happy. I'm glad we didn't lose our fucking minds."

A veteran of his stepfather's construction sites after quitting school at 14, Muggs was not known to shirk. Even so, his heavy workload was intensified by extra commitments – he was producing hits for Ice Cube (Check Yo Self), House Of Pain (Jump Around) and Funkdoobiest (Bow Wow Wow). "The homies would get to hang out," he says today, "but I'd be back at the studio, every day. I was so driven."

And while B-Real seemed to take it in his stride – "We went from being completely anonymous to not being able to go anywhere in an instant. I wouldn't change it for the world though" – success proved more problematic for Sen Dog.

"When we started touring outside America it didn't go well," he says ruefully, admitting to both culture shock and homesickness during lengthy European jaunts. "I would just retreat into my own head. People were like, 'What's wrong with Sen? Why isn't he talking?'"

While the rapper took time out from the band in late 1995 to address those anxieties ("I just needed to clear my head"), Muggs made moves to extricate himself from the live picture altogether. Soon his role was being filled by a revolving cast of DJs plus percussionist Eric Bobo. "I loved doing the shows," he insists. "But it's those other 20 hours… I just felt that my time was more valuable."

He applied those freed-up hours to other projects –

Block-party rockin' beats: DJ Muggs gives the Beastie Boys a summery overhaul.

MUGGS GAME

TEN OF THE CYPRESS HILL SOUNDMASTER'S BEST PRODUCTIONS…

Cypress Hill
Hand On The Pump

(from Cypress Hill, 1991)

Muggs's discrete sonic world in microcosm. An intricate chop-up of Gene Chandler's Duke Of Earl vocal looped into a hypnotic bassline. A squeak of Albert King's Cold Feet adds a phantasmal atmosphere as B-Real and Sen Dog hunt down foes.

Beastie Boys
So What'cha Want (Soul Assassin Remix)

(Bonus track on maxi-single of So What'cha Want, 1992)

Muggs does away with the industrial heaviness of the *Check Your Head* original for a summer block party groove predicated on Joe Tex's laid-back drums from Papa Was Too.

House Of Pain
Jump Around

(single, 1992)

An indomitable riff on Chubby Checker's Popeye (The Hitchhiker) made rapper Everlast – once of Ice-T's Rhyme Syndicate – a star. His HOP bandmate Danny Boy labelled it "our generation's Louie Louie".

Ice Cube
We Had To Tear This Mothafucka Up

(from The Predator, 1992)

Muggs's jarring inversion of the beat from The Emotions' Blind Alley forcefully matched the twitching paranoia of Cube's take on 1992's Los Angeles riots.

Cypress Hill
Insane In The Brain

(single, 1993)

A Chubb Rock dis after the Brooklyn rapper pastiched their style on Yabadabadoo, Muggs's whinnying horse refrain and Sen Dog's threat to "jack yo' ass like a looter in a riot" provided a career-defining hit.

U2
Numb (The Soul Assassins Mix)

(From Melon – Remixes For Propaganda, 1995)

The Dubliners' VHS-only first single from *Zooropa* is remodelled. Muggs cuts up breaks from Bronx rapper Grand Wizard Theodore with drums from Lonnie Smith's Spinning Wheel below The Edge's deadpan vocal.

Ingrid Schroeder
Bee Charmer

(from Bee Charmer, 1996)

A smudged, dubby bassline and subtle atmospherics underscore the sometime Fun Boy 3/Dream Academy backing singer's prayer for rain. Similarly spacious trip-hop moves dominate Muggs's work on Tricky's 1999 LP *Juxtapose*.

DJ Muggs Vs GZA
Smothered Mate

(from Grandmasters, 2005)

Grandmasters, a duet LP with Wu-Tang Clan's GZA, exploded chess's allegorical possibilities as Muggs matched storytelling vim with combative beats and heaving bass.

Cypress Hill
Stairway To Heaven

(from Elephants On Acid, 2018)

Not *that* one. A moody mellotron and singer Brevi's distorted refrain lead us gently into *Elephants On Acid*'s denouement, with B-Real at the pearly gates, lamenting, "No singing no sad songs."

DJ Muggs The Black Goat
Nigrum Mortem

(from Dies Occidendum, 2021)

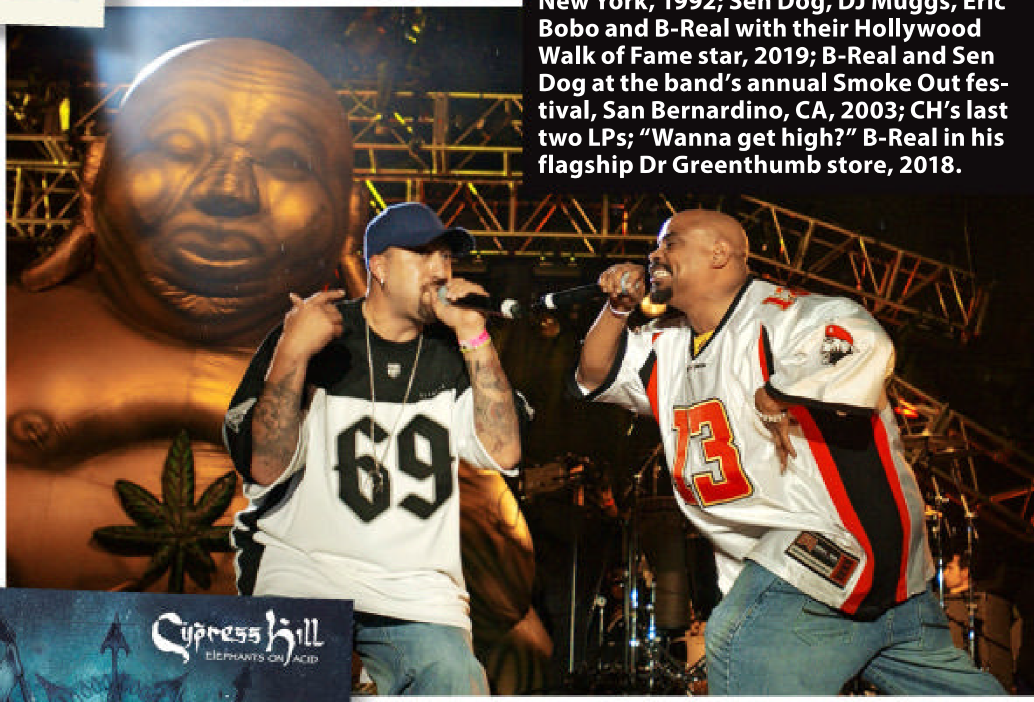
With its cavernous drums, distorted guitars and screeching synths, this slasher film highlight from *Dies Occidendum* is a swirl of disorientating, psychedelic menace.

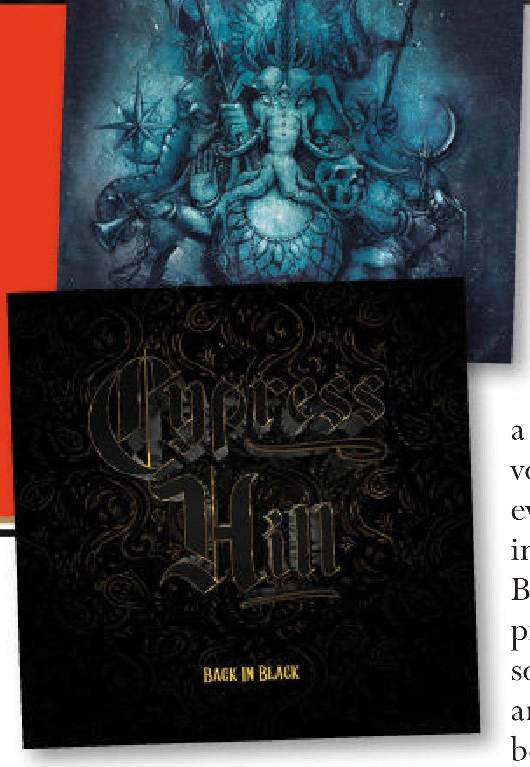
U2 get Mugged on 1995's Numb remix.

Getty (5), Shutterstock

STAMPEDE NOW
CYPRESS HILL

HOLLYWOOD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
CYPRESS HILL





Blunted growth: (clockwise from left) Cypress Hill performing at Lollapalooza, New York, 1992; Sen Dog, DJ Muggs, Eric Bobo and B-Real with their Hollywood Walk of Fame star, 2019; B-Real and Sen Dog at the band's annual Smoke Out festival, San Bernardino, CA, 2003; CH's last two LPs; "Wanna get high?" B-Real in his flagship Dr Greenthumb store, 2018.

> **"WE DIDN'T CARE ABOUT FAME OR MONEY. I'M GLAD WE DIDN'T LOSE OUR FUCKING MINDS."**
> **DJ MUGGS**

recently they've included research into cryptocurrency and blockchain technology. "I became a conglomerate on my own, a multi-millionaire, just by understanding my business."

Muggs still found time to mastermind most of Cypress Hill's studio output as B-Real and Sen Dog soldiered on, their status as hip-hop's Grateful Dead unsullied as they tweaked and toyed with their winning formula – trying out a 50/50 split with nu-metal on 2000's double *Skull & Bones*, putting reggae high in the mix on 2004's *Till Death Do Us Part*. Yet Muggs's limited involvement (just two co-productions) on 2010's uneven Latin crossover *Rise Up* contributed to its commercial failure. Cypress Hill were no longer the unbreakable team of 1989-'95.

IF THERE WERE WHISPERS THAT THAT MEANT Cypress Hill had become essentially a heritage act, they were dispersed by 2018's *Elephants On Acid* – a triumphant full return by DJ Muggs to the mind-bending soundworld of the group's classic LPs.

"It came from a lot of dreams and just going deep inside the psyche," says Muggs, who poured in elements of *Nuggets*-era '60s psych and experiments with street musicians conducted on his working trips to Jordan and Egypt. "Externally, it was Salvador Dali, Alexander Jodorowsky, Picasso… artists going where they've never been before, going to different dimensions and going on an adventure."

And while Muggs arranged its sitars, ouds, organs, flutes and interludes, the tension between B-Real's energetic reflections and Sen's hardcore counter-punch felt reinvigorated from side-projects Prophets Of Rage (B-Real's stadium-touring supergroup with Chuck D and three quarters of Rage Against The Machine) and Powerflo (Sen's heavy metal group).

This year's tenth LP, *Back In Black*, is a more straight-up reiteration of their core vocal strengths, with greater input than ever from Sen. "The Sen Dog we're hearing now is off the fuckin' chain," says B-Real of a set worked up with Detroit producer Black Milk. "It's for the fans not so much into the dark psychedelia as they are those boom-bap crackin' hip-hop beats. We never try to do anything too happy, that's always been our MO. This one just captured a vibe."

It's a vibe that the prolific Muggs – who released five collaborative hip-hop albums (with Rome Streetz, Yelawolf, Crimeapple, Hologram and Flee Lord) and the instrumental LP *Dies Occidendum* for Sacred Bones in 2021 alone – initially seems at odds with.

"I didn't take a back seat on this one – I didn't even know they'd made the record!" he says spikily. "They'll never make a record as great as the records I make." Then his voice softens. "But I know B-Real and Sen Dog killed it, like they always do."

Will they reunite? Probably. "We were all just kids trying to figure this shit out," says Muggs, looking back over 30-plus years of Cypress Hill. "Our relationship just gets better and better. Every year there's more understanding."

For B-Real it goes deeper still. He's under no illusions that had he stayed on the streets in South Gate his prospects would have been infinitely bleaker.

"While Muggs and Sen were trying to make music, I was out there fucking up," he reflects. "They saw something different in me. They saved my life." Ⓜ

Diamond In The Rough

A VISIONARY SINGER-SONGWRITER IT TOOK THE WORLD 40 YEARS TO RECOGNISE, WHO QUIT MUSIC TO TREK BRITAIN IN A HORSE-DRAWN CARAVAN, AND QUIT *AGAIN* TO RETREAT INTO DECADES OF DOMESTIC SECLUSION, *Vashti Bunyan* IS SHROUDED IN MYTH AND PICTURESQUE LEGEND. BUT AS HER EXTRAORDINARY NEW MEMOIR REVEALS, THAT'S ONLY THE HALF OF IT. "I KNOW WHERE THE TRAUMA LIVES," SHE TELLS *Andrew Male*.

PHOTOGRAPH: *Phillip Harrington*

Credit here

IT WAS SPRING 1966 AND VASHTI Bunyan was in London's Olympic Studios, recording Mann and Weil's call-and-response love song The Coldest Night Of The Year with harmony duo Twice As Much. It was the 20-year-old's next potential single for Andrew Loog Oldham's Immediate Records label and she was on a high. "Oh, I just loved it," she tells MOJO today. "We'd been rehearsing and doing overlays. We wanted a Beach Boys kind of sound, and I think we got it. It was great."

In the two years since she'd been thrown out of Oxford's Ruskin School Of Drawing And Fine Art, this West London-raised "wild child" had been introduced to Rolling Stones manager Loog Oldham and recorded a brace of singles, a defiantly introspective cover of Jagger/Richards' Some Things Just Stick In Your Mind for Decca and her own gorgeously bereft Train Song for Columbia. She'd been through a whirlwind of TV, radio and press, but all for nothing. No sales. Shelved singles. Coldest Night felt like her last chance.

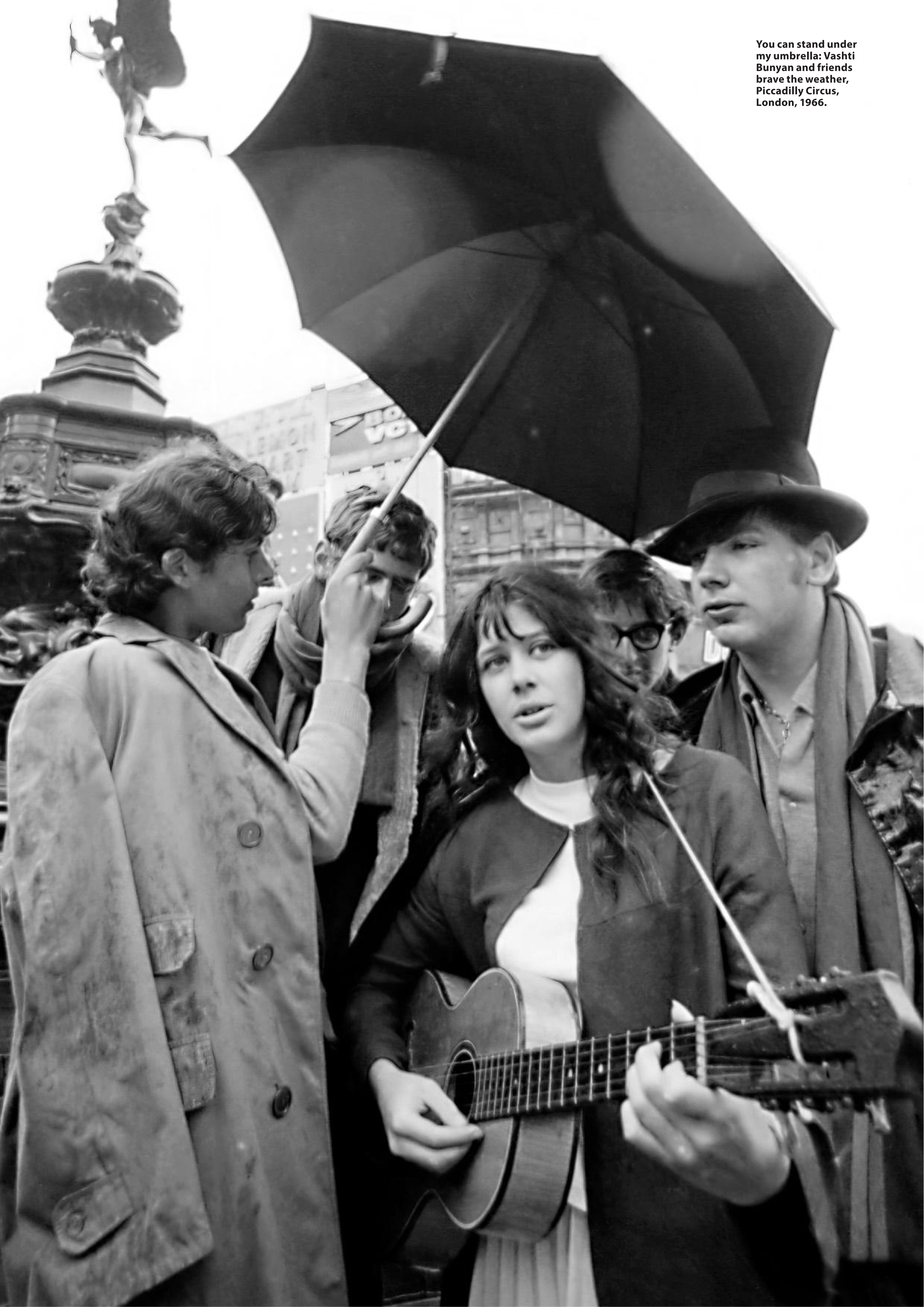
Phillip Harrington/Alamy

"But it never happened and I was never told why," says Bunyan. When another potential single was shelved, Bunyan's world fell away. "It was a series of things going wrong," she explains. "The singles that didn't work, the recordings that weren't released, combined with various other heartbreaks. I had no idea it was depression. Just this sensation of an abyss opening up next to me. It had never been there before but after that it was always there."

Prescribed Librium and Valium, she turned her back on singing and, in the early summer of 1968, left home with her dog Blue and went to live under a rhododendron bush on Bromley Common, south London, with her artist friend (and soon to be lover) Robert Lewis. When police moved them on they bought an old horse-drawn baker's van and a black horse called Bess with money loaned to them by Lewis's friend Donovan.

"He'd just bought a place off the west coast of Scotland," explains Bunyan, "where there'd be this renaissance of writers, painters and musicians."

Romanced by the idea of an artistic community in this remote corner of the UK, Bunyan and Lewis decided they'd travel up by horse and cart, doing odd jobs, putting on shows. A chance to escape all her dark thoughts, the journey would come to shape who Vashti Bunyan was ➢



You can stand under my umbrella: Vashti Bunyan and friends brave the weather, Piccadilly Circus, London, 1966.

≺ and influence and inspire her defining works, the lilting, pastoral love songs of 1970's *Just Another Diamond Day*. It also brought a weight of subsequently-spun myth and misinterpretation.

"I felt that a lot of my story had been written by other people," she explains, "and that they'd painted my journey as all terribly romantic. Parts of it were but I didn't want it to be portrayed as a lovely little skip through the tulips. I know where the trauma lives."

IT'S A BRIGHT WINTER'S DAY IN EDINBURGH AND Vashti Bunyan is sitting in her kitchen talking about her new book, Wayward, her own account of her life, but focused on that long journey to the Scottish islands.

It's a book she first began 28 years ago, primarily for her children, "to try and explain their lives to them a little". That time around, the story was interrupted by music, after Bunyan typed her own name into her new computer and discovered that *Just Another Diamond Day* and all those forgotten and shelved singles were enjoying a new life on the collectors' market. With the July 2000 reissue of the album arrived a new generation of fans. Bunyan became a figurehead for the awkwardly-named "freak folk" scene, championed by Devendra Banhart and Joanna Newsom, and subsequently recorded two further solo albums, 2005's richly orchestrated *Lookaftering* and 2014's hushed and spare *Heartleap*.

DECCA
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SOME THINGS JUST STICK IN YOUR MIND
VASHTI
full frequency range recording

"I WANTED TO BRING A BIT OF TRUTH AND REALITY INTO THE POP SONG. I WANTED MY SONGS TO BE ABOUT THE MISERY OF LOVE."

Vashti Bunyan

"After each album I intended to get back to the book," she says, with a light, self-deprecating laugh, "then it was lockdown and Kieran Evans, who made the documentary about my journey [2008's From Here To Before], called and asked what I was doing. I lied and said I was writing. He put me in touch with Lee Brackstone at White Rabbit Books. Four copy editors later, here we are."

Bunyan jokes but Wayward is written in the same spare, understated style as her songs. As such, she was reluctant to spell certain things out, even on the advice of her editors. "I wanted to leave a space for whoever's reading to make their own picture or understand it in their own way," she says.

COLUMBIA
COLUMBIA
45 RPM
DB 7917
TRAIN SONG
Columbia
EMI

While it's evidently a book about a quest, it's not entirely clear what the quest was for.

"I wanted romance," offers Bunyan. "Robert and I wanted to make a picture within reality. The wagon was a beautiful picture, with its pink eiderdown and lace pillows. That was really important to me, to make everything beautiful, and keep everything clean and white. That helped me get better. I could enjoy the world again rather than being terrified of it."

It wasn't all pink eiderdown and lace pillows. Bunyan recounts "long days walking long roads… looking after a horse who needed water and food, a fire that needed wood, a wagon that needed a place to park every night, a dog intent on getting himself run over, and an infuriating and determined character for a partner."

At the same time, the logistics distracted Bunyan "from my troubled self", and so did the new songs she was composing, songs rooted in a childhood love of Beatrix Potter and Alice In Wonderland plus the melodies of carols and hymns, and her previous life as a discarded '60s pop singer.

"Carols were maybe my first pop songs," says Bunyan. "And I think they're at the heart of all my songs. Not folk songs. I was never exposed to folk songs. Also, my father had a 78 of Ernest Lough singing O For The Wings Of A Dove. I played that over and over: 'O for the wings, for the wings of a dove/Far away, far away would I rove.'"

Courtesy Vashti Bunyan, Inda Bunyan/Courtesy Vashti Bunyan, CS Sykes/Courtesy Vashti Bunyan, Getty (3)

AS A YOUNG TEEN BUNYAN LISTENED TO BUDDY Holly and The Everly Brothers, but it was her encounter with the music of Bob Dylan at Ruskin, and then her meeting with two members of Oxford University's Experimental Theatre Club, future Pythons Michael Palin and Terry Jones, that showed her a different way of viewing the world.

"Mike and Terry pointed out that the world is ridiculous," says Bunyan. "It's so hard to describe but it felt like we were getting rid of the old guard and bringing in something completely new. With Dylan it wasn't so much the music as the lyrics. It changed me quite a lot. The air in my head filled up a little."

With her sister-in-law's guitar and a copy of Bert Weedon's Play In A Day book, Bunyan had started to write songs, briefly forming a trio with her friend Jenny Lewis and her godfather's daughter Angy Strange (the latter pair would later release singles on Verve and Columbia). But after two years at Ruskin she was asked to leave for spending too much time on music. Following a trip to New York to visit her sister, where she bought a copy of *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*, Bunyan returned to London determined to be a songwriter.

"I felt there were momentous changes ahead and I wanted to bring a bit of truth and reality into the pop song," she says. "I wanted my songs to be about the misery of love, because I was getting my heart broken. That part of my life was constant heartbreak and these were songs inspired by heartbreak."

Borrowing some money, Bunyan booked an hour in a London studio where she recorded 12 songs onto tape. Then a chance encounter with a theatrical agent at a friend's party led to a meeting with Andrew Loog Oldham, the 21-year-old manager of The Rolling Stones and ex-manager of Marianne Faithfull. Although headstrong and determined about her music, Bunyan was also "silent, wide-eyed and almost not there" around Oldham.

"That didn't work," she says. "It confused people. I was impossible to read. Well, it's kind of hard to read somebody who just merges with the wallpaper, but has huge ideas of what she wants to do. I was completely the wrong kind of person to have the ambitions that I had."

Fascinated by Oldham's Phil Spector approach to recording, Bunyan was eager to learn studio skills but had little involvement in anything beyond her vocals.

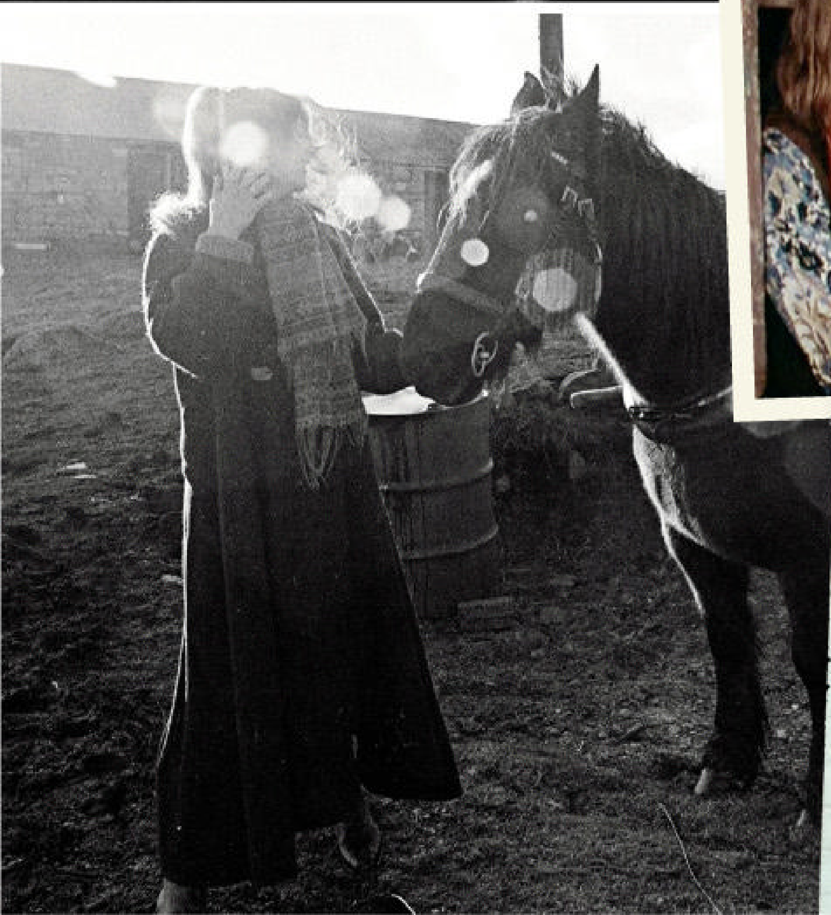
"When all the instrumentation was done, I was brought in and I was put in the little glass booth," she says. "I had nothing to do with anything. I didn't want to be double-tracked. I didn't want to have an American accent. Then, when I found out that Andrew wanted me to be the new Marianne Faithfull, that made me disappear into myself even more. She was so much what I would have *liked* to have been, but just wasn't. I wanted to be seen for what I was but didn't know how to get there. That's why I gave it all up. It was too painful to want something so badly and not know how to get it."

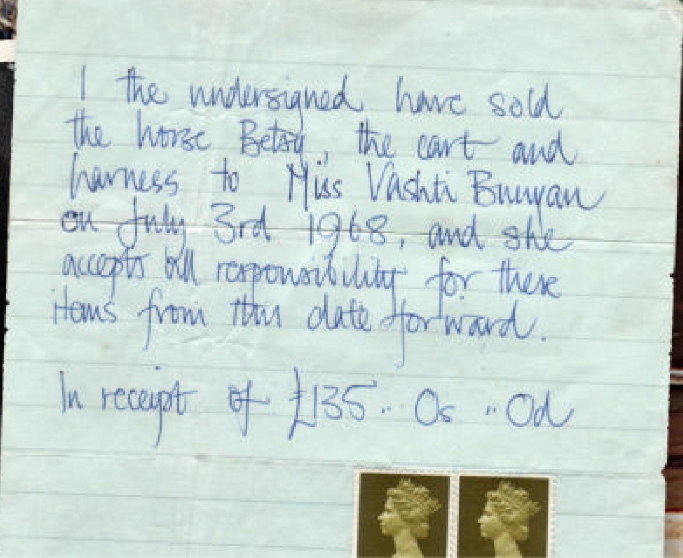
THE FIRST SONG VASHTI BUNYAN WROTE ON THE road with Robert Lewis was called Glow Worms. It's a love song to Lewis but it's also a song about the world around her ("Dawn-time mist begins reflecting light") and a commitment to the journey they've embarked upon: "Love me through the day and I'll with you go/Into summer and the next year's snow." ➢

Still taken from the film Vashti Bunyan: From Here To Before, Directed by Kieran Evans

This machine kills

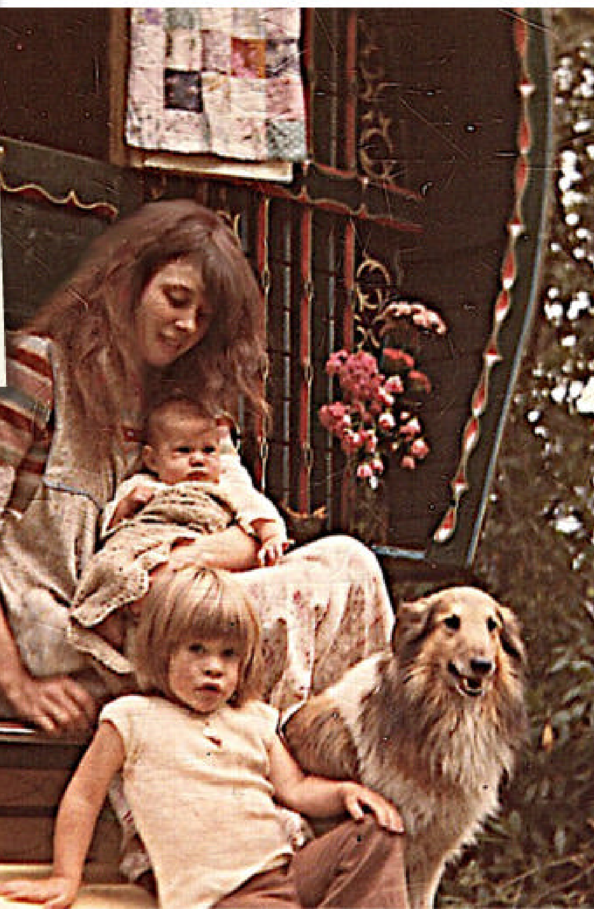
Wandering star: (main) Vashti Bunyan stepping up, May 15, 1965; (clockwise from top left) Donovan, whose Isle Of Skye commune Bunyan and partner Robert Lewis journeyed to in 1968; with Twice As Much's (left) Dave Skinner and Andrew Rose; Andrew Loog Oldham wanted Bunyan to be "the new Marianne Faithfull"; on the road with family, 1973; receipt from Alfie Ball for horse Betsy (Bess) and cart; Bunyan playing for Lewis on their caravan; with Bess on North Uist, 1969.





I the undersigned have sold
the horse Betsy, the cart and
harness to Miss Vashti Bunyan
on July 3rd 1968, and she
accepts all responsibility for these
items from this date forward.

In receipt of £135 . 0s . 0d



“That was partly down to Robert saying, ‘Stop writing these miserable little love songs and write about what’s around you,’” explains Bunyan, “So I did. The songs gradually became more narrative-based. I was telling stories rather than saying, ‘Oh, God, life is terrible.’ I started to enjoy that.”

Some of the most beautiful songs were written in the worst times and harshest environments – times of no food or complete exhaustion, trudging up the A6 through the industrial North, or weathering a bleak winter in the Lake District – continual challenges to Lewis and Bunyan’s relationship.

“A lot of the songs I wrote are at a rocking or walking pace,” explains Bunyan. “They’re comforting because I was writing them to comfort me. They didn’t address the reality of me and Robert or the realities of life in the country. Reality was a long way away. Or at least I was trying to keep it a long way away.”

A brief, disastrous trip to the Netherlands, where Bunyan road-tested her new songs in loud, tiny pubs, led to an encounter with the American singer and banjo player Derroll Adams, then living above a pub in Ghent, and recovering from a recent heart attack. “He said something that would change my life forever,” says Bunyan. “‘Don’t hide your light.’”

On the train back through Belgium, looking at the haystacks, the flat fields, and feeling she could be happy in that world, Bunyan wrote the title song of *Just Another Diamond Day*: “Just another field to plough/Just a grain of wheat.”

Then, staying over in London before heading back to the Lake District, Bunyan was introduced to Joe Boyd, the leading folk rock producer in the UK.

“I played him some songs, probably Rose Hip November and Diamond Day,” says Bunyan. “He’d been wanting to make an album with me since the Immediate days and I’d stupidly ignored him. Now he said he wanted to record these new songs as a document of our journey.”

But first the journey had to be completed. Arriving at Donovan’s commune on Skye, Bunyan and Lewis discovered that there was no place for them. So they settled still further west on the Isle of Berneray, north of North Uist, in an old Ferry Cottage which they retitled ‘Fairy Cottage’. By the time it came to record the album, Bunyan discovered she was pregnant. “You can hear that in the recordings,” she says. “Someone who is incredibly happy and incredibly frightened at the same time.”

THE WORLD OF SOUND Techniques studio in November 1969 seemed initially very different from that of Immediate in 1966. Unlike the self-consciously Spectorish Loog Oldham, Boyd was actively engaged with the lives of the musicians he was working with. But then, as the producer started to bring in such revered folk players as Simon Nicol and Dave Swarbrick of Fairport Convention and Robin Williamson of The Incredible String Band, Bunyan realised Boyd’s idea of how her music should sound was very different to her own.

“The songs arranged by [Nick Drake arranger] Robert Kirby – Rainbow River, Swallow Song, Diamond Day – were absolutely what I wanted,” says Bunyan: “that almost classical feel with string quartet. I didn’t really like the folky mandolins and violins or the fiddle on Jog Along Bess, but I was still stuck in the idea that the producer was the boss. Joe apologised later for condemning me forever to the dreaded ‘f’ word, but he said that when he’d visited us we lived the most folky life of anyone he’d ever met.”

The songs on *Just Another Diamond Day* had been written in the innocence and optimism of the ’60s and recorded in their last weeks. When the album finally came out it was December 1970.

“And by that time it was too late,” says Bunyan. “We missed that window. Almost all the changes through the ’60s were huge but that one at the end was really marked. Everything had become more cynical. All You Need Is Love had became laughable. Those 12 months mattered so much.”

When the album failed to sell Bunyan literally closed the door on that part of her life. “I put everything in a cupboard and that was that,” she says. “I felt for many years that I’d failed. I couldn’t even sing to my kids and I didn’t want them to know about the album or anything.”

Bunyan and Lewis travelled for another three years then settled down with a family. Eventually they separated. Vashti didn’t write another song until she started listening to the reissued copy of *Just Another Diamond Day* in 2000.

“Nice things were being said about it,” she explains. “It took me a while but even-

Pilgrim’s Progress

VASHTI BUNYAN IN FOUR ALBUMS, BY ANDREW MALE.

SOME THINGS JUST STICK IN YOUR MIND

★★★★

(FatCat/DiCristina, 2007)

All of Bunyan’s surviving pop singles and demos from 1964 to 1967, now best viewed as the remains of a bold experiment to reposition the ’60s female pop song as a wintry place of melancholy, heartbreak and disillusionment. The influence of carols, nursery rhymes and hymns is strong but so is a love of Dylan’s acerbity and wit and Everlys harmonies.

SOME THINGS Just Stick In Your Mind
SINGLES and DEMOS 1964 to 1967
LOTS ROAD
VASHTI BUNYAN

VASHTI BUNYAN
Just Another Diamond Day

JUST ANOTHER DIAMOND DAY

★★★★★

(Philips, 1970)

When released in December 1970, this “document of a pilgrimage” already seemed part of a bygone romantic age. Then again, it was never intended as a reflection of reality but a picture of a dream, the wistful songs intended to lift the spirits of its songwriter. These days it has exactly that effect on the listener, a collection of protective lullabies guiding you to a safe place.

LOOKAFTERING

★★★★

(FatCat, 2005)

In its production and its themes this is very much a companion record to *Diamond Day*, while documenting Bunyan’s post-travelling life of children and domesticity. Just as Joe Boyd assembled the cream of the folk music community to record *Diamond Day*, producer Max Richter brought in ‘freak folk’ luminaries Devendra Banhart, Joanna Newsom and Adem to add colour and depth to Bunyan’s delicate songs.

Vashti Bunyan
Lookaftering

HEARTLEAP

★★★★★

(FatCat, 2014)

Vashti Bunyan
Heartleap

The intention was to record and produce herself, almost as an echo of those early 1964 demos, but for songs rich with emotional experience. Addressing subjects she had previously avoided (her mother, her depression) but bound up in images from dreams, it is an ethereal, shimmering whisper of an album, rich in an elusive magic and always demanding another listen.

CS Sykes/Courtesy Vashti Bunyan, Camera Press, Jason Evans

> "IT TOOK ME A WHILE BUT EVENTUALLY I COULD HEAR *JUST ANOTHER DIAMOND DAY* REMOVED FROM 1970, REMOVED FROM FAILURE AND DISMAY."
>
> Vashti Bunyan

Diamond life: (clockwise from left) Bunyan at home, 2005 – "I've started to pick up the guitar again"; the horse-and-cart years; with *Lookaftering* producer Max Richter; 2005's *Prospect Hummer* EP with Animal Collective; forthcoming Wayward memoir.

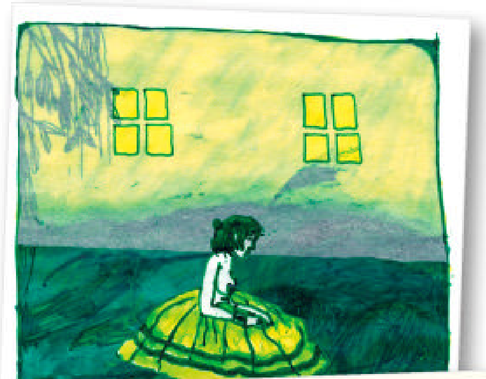
tually I could hear it removed from 1970, removed from failure and dismay. It unlocked something and I started writing again."

Bunyan was eased back into recording by US alt-tronica outfit Animal Collective, who invited her to collaborate on their 2005 EP, *Prospect Hummer*.

"That was massively important," she says, "because they made me do things I felt I couldn't do and it was wonderful. They created a safe space for me because I was really frightened. They pushed me gently."

The songs Bunyan wrote for her first comeback album, 2005's *Lookaftering*, recorded with Max Richter and involving Devendra Banhart, Joanna Newsom, Robert Kirby and Adem, reference the life that Bunyan had lived after *Diamond Day*, songs about children and domesticity but also a longing for freedom and love.

"I had no awareness where those songs were coming from," says Bunyan. "It was only when we were mastering that I realised that they were about looking back. They and *Diamond Day* are bookends of a life. The songs Same But Different and Here Before just came to the surface from nowhere. Where had they been before then? Had they been waiting? I don't know."



WAYWARD
Vashti Bunyan
Just Another
Life to Live

IN HER BOOK, BUNYAN WRITES affectionately and in depth about the recording of *Lookaftering*. However, of its follow-up, 2014's spare and brilliant *Heartleap*, she has less to say. "I think that's a dissatisfaction with the recording," she admits.

Written, recorded, edited, produced, arranged and mostly played by Bunyan, *Heartleap* was an attempt to return to the simplicity and control she'd always desired for her songs since the early '60s.

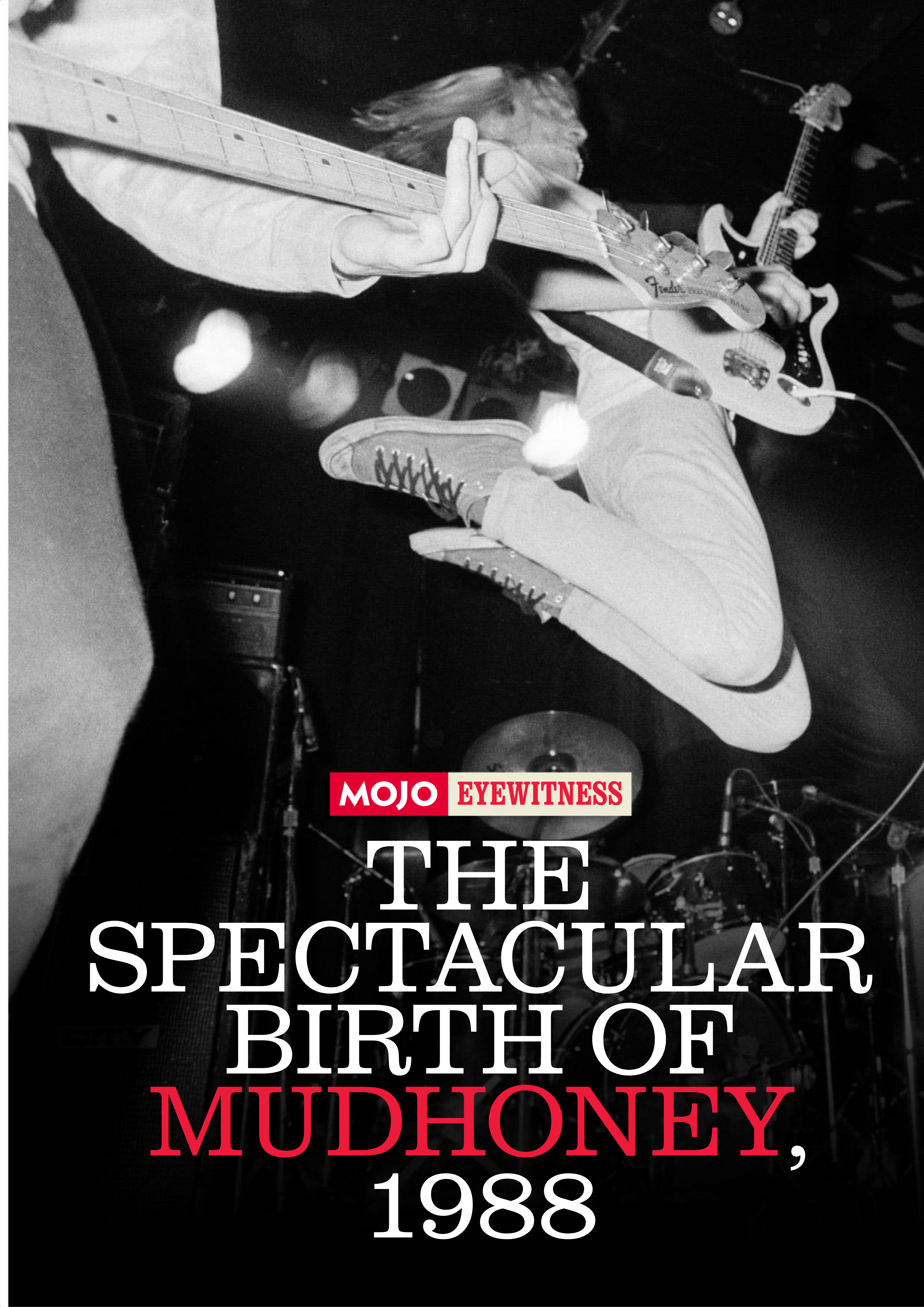
"But then I began to make changes," she says, "and that was the disappointment. I felt that I still hadn't got it the way that I had it in the beginning. I got too self-involved. But also, one of the reviews said *Heartleap* was closer to my original vision than *Lookaftering*. I didn't want people to say, 'Oh, Max was no good so now she's doing it all by herself.' I just wanted to reject the constrictions of the studio. That's why it took seven years. But I was listening to the track Blue Shed the other day and I did think, Wow, that's really good."

As to new songs, Bunyan says she's written nothing since announcing *Heartleap* would be her final LP.

"But I think writing the book has changed something in me," she says. "Music was such a huge part of my life up until I rejected it after *Diamond Day*. But I must have been looking for something else to replace it. It's not that the life I had and the children and all the adventures meant nothing. It was just that there was obviously something missing. I don't think I really found it until I realised it was music all along." Vashti Bunyan starts laughing. "Oh bloody hell."

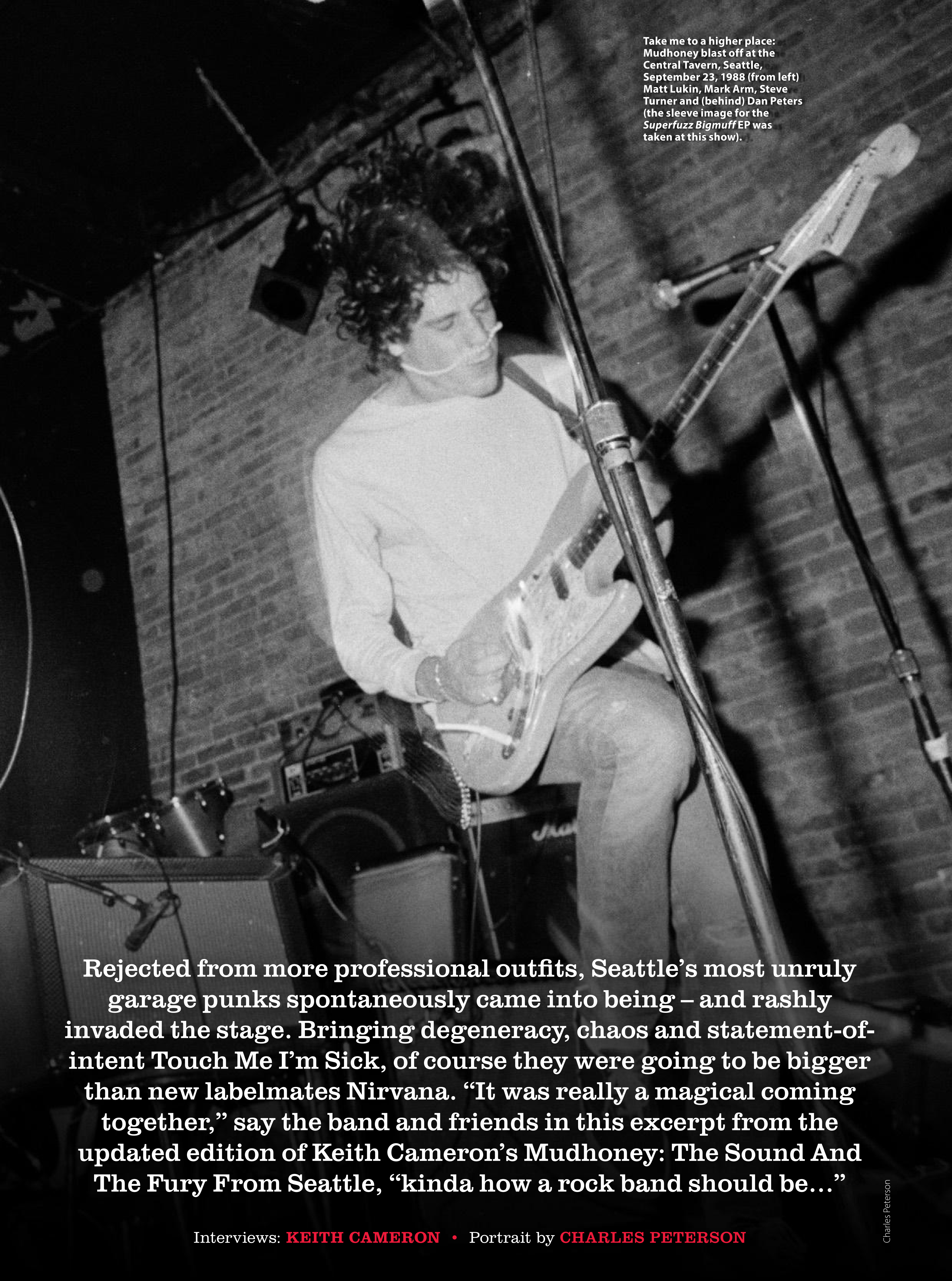
A few days after our interview MOJO receives an e-mail from Bunyan. In it she says, "I've been picking up my guitar again to rehearse for the Barbican show in April. I was going to hand it over to others so I could just sing, but it seems now I will be playing guitar too. So who knows what might happen… Maybe songs will come to the surface again. That would be nice." Ⓜ

Wayward by Vashti Bunyan is published by White Rabbit on March 31. Vashti plays London's Barbican on April 2.



MOJO EYEWITNESS

THE SPECTACULAR BIRTH OF MUDHONEY, 1988



Take me to a higher place: Mudhoney blast off at the Central Tavern, Seattle, September 23, 1988 (from left) Matt Lukin, Mark Arm, Steve Turner and (behind) Dan Peters (the sleeve image for the *Superfuzz Bigmuff* EP was taken at this show).

Rejected from more professional outfits, Seattle's most unruly garage punks spontaneously came into being – and rashly invaded the stage. Bringing degeneracy, chaos and statement-of-intent Touch Me I'm Sick, of course they were going to be bigger than new labelmates Nirvana. "It was really a magical coming together," say the band and friends in this excerpt from the updated edition of Keith Cameron's Mudhoney: The Sound And The Fury From Seattle, "kinda how a rock band should be..."

Interviews: **KEITH CAMERON** • Portrait by **CHARLES PETERSON**

Charles Peterson

AMPLIFIER
INPUT
VOLUME
TONE
SUSTAIN
BIG MUFF
electro-harmonix

“THE SHITTINESS OF THE GUITAR SOUNDS… WAS THE KEY THING.” Dan Peters

Bruce Pavitt: When Jonathan [Poneman] and I quit our jobs and opened the doors to Sub Pop – April 1, 1988 – our big new record was by a dead band, Green River's *Rehab Doll*. Which was a little challenging. With Green River, there had been a split in sensibilities.

Mark Arm: Stone [Gossard, Green River guitarist] and Jeff [Ament, GR bassist], I think they really wanted to make a career of music. And they rightly thought they weren't going to get anywhere with me as a singer. We came back from this West Coast tour and they said, "The band's broken up". To me it was a relief. So then I decided to call [ex-GR guitarist] Steve [Turner] and see what he had going on. Somehow he'd already convinced Dan, one of the two best drummers that we knew, to play with him.

Dan Peters: I knew Matt [Lukin] from the Melvins – our bands had played together a couple of times. I was convinced when he came to play with us, we'd never see him again, because the Melvins were this precision machine, with all these complicated riffs, and here we are just banging out one chord. But the first practice with Matt was great. He goes to the store, walks over to the beer cooler and grabs a half case of beer.

Matt Lukin: I'm like, "Jeez, if I can get this drunk and still play the songs it seems to be a pretty fun band to be in."

Steve Turner: We were just thinking of it as a short-term project, because we were the third band Dan was in at the time, I was just taking another sabbatical from college… There was no real hope of getting anywhere. I wanted a record out, at least leave behind an oddball artefact for someone to discover 20 years later.

BP: I was still working at [Seattle elevator music institution] Muzak with Mark in January '88, when he came in with a demo tape, says I've got this new project going on, and I heard Touch Me I'm Sick. It sounded really great. It was their first rehearsal, like "Hey, we just wrote this song", and you could just tell that they were in the zone and they were going to get really good.

MA: It was all about getting stuff down to its essence. And I don't know that we ever completely attained that goal. Though we do have a couple of very, very simple songs.

ST: We knew it was going to be gnarly: we loved The Stooges, The Saints, later Australian stuff like Feedtime and The Scientists, Lubricated Goat… So the crazy post-Birthday Party sound, and then that blazing Detroit sound – we liked them both. Me and Mark were turning each other on to the harder, grungier stuff that was hanging around.

BP: In that month of April, Mudhoney plays their first show. They record Touch Me I'm Sick. Nirvana does a showcase for me, Jon, the bartender and the doorman at [Seattle grunge dive supreme] the Central Tavern on April 10 or so – we decide to do a single with them. This all happens within three weeks, the odds being a million to one that we'd ever make it work. All of a sudden, Nirvana and Mudhoney basically step into being, pretty much at the same time.

Jack Endino: Mudhoney seemed like a 'group' in the best sense. There was a chemistry there, that was obvious. Everyone totally respected everyone else, yet there was no pussyfooting around with opinions either. They meant business but they were there to have fun too.

DP: The recording process was fairly new to everybody. That was the exciting part of it. You'd go in, set up, and bust it out, make a record in one day. Jack was there to capture the raw tones coming out of the amps. He was really great at capturing the *shittiness* of the guitar sounds, and that was the key thing. Those guitar sounds are pretty damn crappy – but they were intended to be pretty damn crappy. We didn't think much of [Touch Me I'm Sick] really. We'd relegated it to the B-side. Sweet Young Thing… was what we considered the A-side, and Touch Me I'm Sick was a nice tidy little B-side.

Thurston Moore: Susanne Sasic at Pier Platters record store in Hoboken, New Jersey, she was a very important advocate on the East Coast for what was happening with Sub Pop. When Touch Me I'm Sick came out, the whole front window of the record store was lined with all these brown vinyl 7-inches with no sleeve. She was so excited by this record – like, 'This is it, this is the news!' And it was a really great record. So I was excited to see Mudhoney.

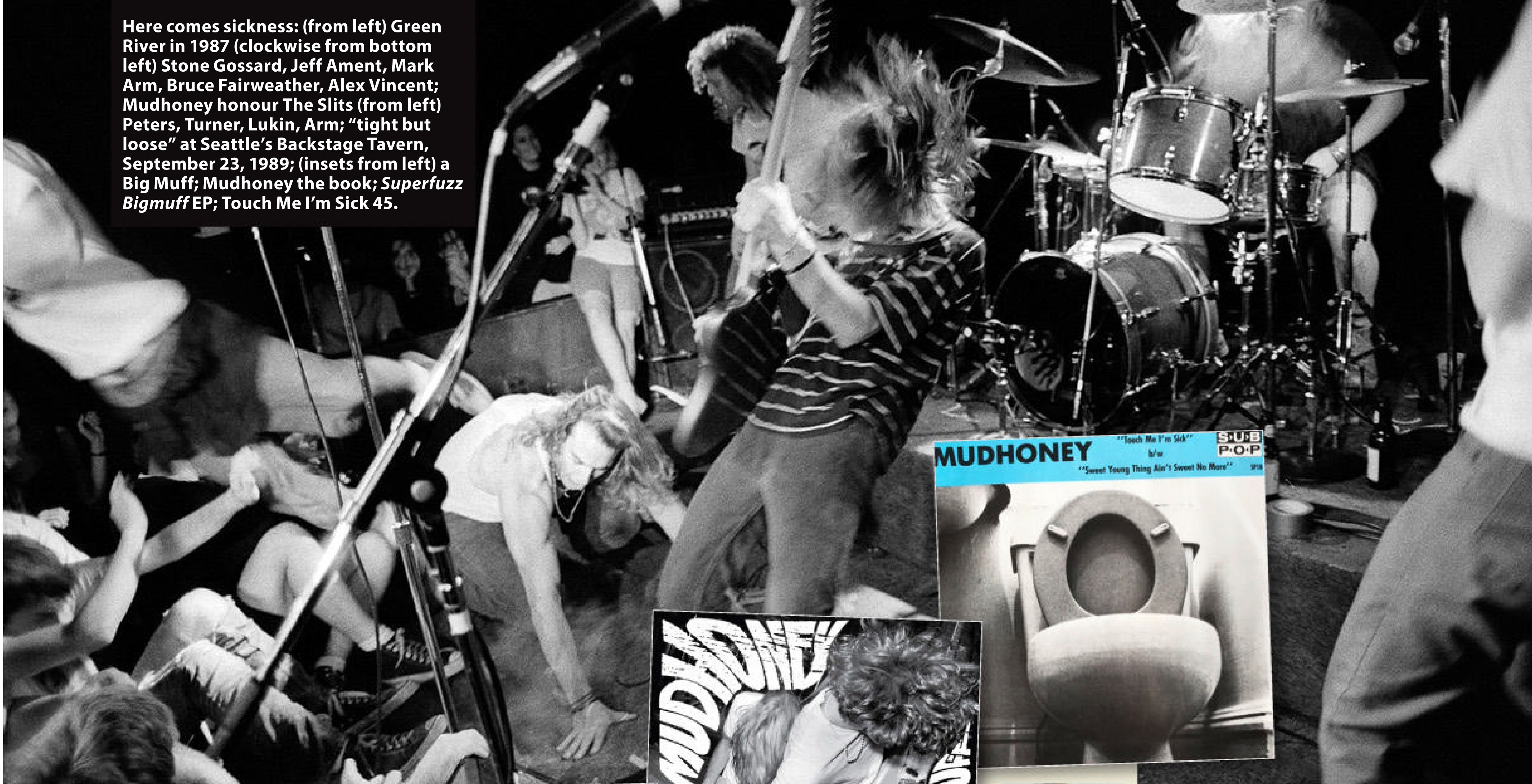
Nils Bernstein: I remember Bruce and Jon, early on, being unsure about Nirvana. Like, "OK, these guys are friends of the Melvins, they might be good", whatever… But, "*MarkandSteveand-MattandDan* have a band, it's called Mudhoney – that's gonna be amazing!" They figured we're definitely gonna be good for this year if we can put out a record by Mudhoney. There was no question about Mudhoney. Because Touch Me I'm Sick is – *ta-da*! If any song defines late-'80s Seattle music, then that does it. Nobody really remembers the first songs by Skin Yard or Soundgarden or Malfunkshun – but Touch Me I'm Sick, everybody knows. Mudhoney was really a magical coming together.

Jonathan Poneman: Seeing Mudhoney play that first time at The Vogue [on April 19] – it was tight and loose. Menacing yet playful. There was a fuck-all attitude, this air of degeneracy, but with these amazing songs. I mean, they were instant classics. *Every single song*: it was like, this is fucking great.

BP: The live shows that happened over the summer was when things really kicked into a high gear. In particular Mudhoney, Soundgarden and The Fluid played the Central Tavern on July 2 – absolutely incredible. Then July 3, The Fluid, Blood Circus and Nirvana played at The Vogue. That was where the community was pretty much sold that there was something going on.

Charles Peterson: I missed Mudhoney's first gig, I was out of town. So until I saw them at the Central I hadn't heard anything. I was just blown away. It was so different from Green River, for one thing, and musically so much more what I was into, which I also knew was what Mark and Steve were into. Taking that great synthesis of punk and '60s garage rock, but making something new of both. Even though a lot of the time Mark and Steve would be just falling into each other and jumping, it had this tightness, this performance aspect to it that hadn't really been seen with a debut band before.

Charles Peterson (3), Steve Double/Camera Press, Getty (6)


MUDHONEY
"Touch Me I'm Sick"
b/w
"Sweet Young Thing Ain't Sweet No More"
SUB POP
SP18
MUDHONEY
SUPERFUZZ BIGMUFF
MUDHONEY
THE SOUND AND THE FURY FROM SEATTLE
KEITH CAMERON
UPDATED EDITION
"…probably the best book written about grunge"

Here comes sickness: (from left) Green River in 1987 (clockwise from bottom left) Stone Gossard, Jeff Ament, Mark Arm, Bruce Fairweather, Alex Vincent; Mudhoney honour The Slits (from left) Peters, Turner, Lukin, Arm; "tight but loose" at Seattle's Backstage Tavern, September 23, 1989; (insets from left) a Big Muff; Mudhoney the book; *Superfuzz Bigmuff* EP; Touch Me I'm Sick 45.

Ed Fotheringham: It was raucous! It was a beer-drinking, sweaty *event*. They had a sense of humour. They looked like they were having a good time. Green River did become a bifurcated band: there was this bizarre tension between the glam metal thing and then the punk Stooges-y thing, and it became confusing – I didn't know what they were trying to do. In Mudhoney, it was absolutely nailed. Mudhoney sounded very complete. I don't mind avant-garde stuff, I just don't like to be confused. And that's why people enjoyed them. Those shows were explosive.

Garrett Shavlik: I was just psyched to see Mudhoney live, because Pavitt had been sending me demo cassettes. They did not disappoint. The Fluid had always prided ourselves on our live show. Boy, after Mudhoney, we were like, "We really have to step up to the plate now." The abandon coming off the stage was just unbelievable. Controlled chaos. Everything you want in punk rock. Like the first time I saw Black Flag or the Circle Jerks – holy fuck, but *with a groove*. It was pretty incredible.

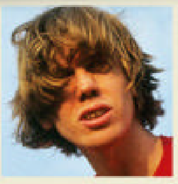
Kim Thayil: Mark took off that artifice that he'd required with Green River. From the opening chords Lukin would be throwing his bass around and Mark and Steve were jumping up and down and sideways. They were very animated, very wild. Kinda how a rock band should be: out of control. It was rawer, wilder. It had the element that so many rock'n'roll people are afraid of, which is: chaos. What makes heavy metal unattractive to me is the fact that they have to put every note in the right place. It's so informed by their mother's classical music collection. Heavy metal and punk share roots, but heavy metal's fascistic fixation with order sucked the life out. Mudhoney were an antidote to that.

TM: To this day they're probably the most fun-loving band I've ever toured with. Mudhoney loved what they were doing so much. They made each other laugh all the time. Wherever we were in our headspace, be it dour or whatever, they would just show up laughing. Spilling out of their van, wrestling each other. They were just like a gang, who'd found this thing and it was brilliant. I liked Dan Peters a lot. His sense of humour was very dry, he seemed very grounded. One of those people who was unflappable. Like all he needed was a good day's work and a beer and a cigarette. Real working-class bliss. I always loved that about him.

DP: Knowing we'd got picked to do a tour with Sonic Youth – who to us were rock stars – was amazing. Every show was a gas. When you're playing with them you're playing to a sold-out venue. We just had a blast, partying, it couldn't get any better. It felt like everything I'd ever worked for was being vindicated.

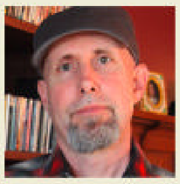
CP: I took the pictures for the *Superfuzz Bigmuff* cover at their second [Central Tavern] show. The Central is like any sort of bar venue: the stage is knee-height, there was 100 people there, maybe 150 tops. So I believe that shot was when they come out of the drum bit in In'N'Out Of Grace and fall into each other. I wanted the image to be something that captured the energy but somewhat abstract, that wasn't just Mark or Steve screaming into the microphone, or a full band shot where you had to get every member in the photo. I wanted to be a little more ambiguous. You don't see either of their faces, it's just hair and beads. And what are they doing? Wrestling? Embracing each other? It's very home-made, but I like that aspect to it.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

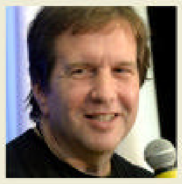


● **Thurston Moore (Sonic Youth, guitar/vocals)**

● **Nils Bernstein (fan; later Sub Pop publicist)**

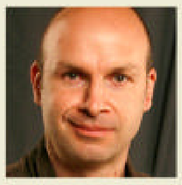


● **Bruce Pavitt (Sub Pop, co-founder)**

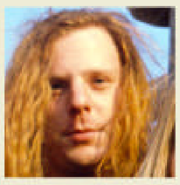


● **Jonathan Poneman (Sub Pop, co-founder)**

● **Mark Arm (Mudhoney, guitar/vocals)**

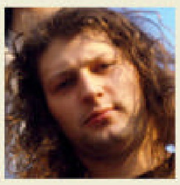


● **Charles Peterson (photographer)**



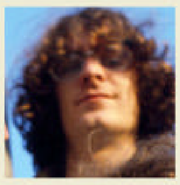
● **Dan Peters (Mudhoney, drums)**

● **Ed Fotheringham (Thrown Ups, vocals; artist)**



● **Matt Lukin (Mudhoney, bass)**

● **Garrett Shavlik (The Fluid, drummer)**



● **Steve Turner (Mudhoney, guitar)**

● **Kim Thayil (Soundgarden, guitar)**

● **Jack Endino (producer)**

ST: Old fuzzboxes, you could get them for 5 dollars in downtown Seattle. The Big Muff, I discovered that probably just before Mudhoney started. I'd heard of them being really cool and some shop had a pile of them on sale out on the floor, literally a stack of Big Muffs. So on *Superfuzz Bigmuff* I used the Big Muff, Mark used the SuperFuzz. The Big Muff has gnarlier tones, and the SuperFuzz is… fuzzier.

TM: *Superfuzz Bigmuff* hit the mark. It was Mudhoney's *Never Mind The Bollocks*, like six 7-inch singles on an LP.

BP: The impact of *Superfuzz Bigmuff* – you could just tell things were clicking. And this is months before Mr Peel started promoting [label compilation] *Sub Pop 200* and blowing up the scene.

John Peel [writing in The Observer, January 1989]: "It is going to take something special to stop *Sub Pop 200* being the set of recordings by which others are judged for some time… Mudhoney and Soundgarden tour this year. The distant roar is the sound of queues forming."

Adapted from the updated edition of Mudhoney: The Sound & The Fury From Seattle, published by Omnibus on March 24.

ENJOY THE SILENCE

OUT OF THE DECADE THAT TASTE FORGOT CAME A WORK OF TIMELESS BEAUTY: **TALK TALK**'S *SPIRIT OF EDEN*. FROM A NEW BOOK ABOUT THE BAND AND THEIR ENIGMATIC FRONTMAN **MARK HOLLIS**, AUTHOR **BEN WARDLE** TELLS HOW DARK SARCASM, FAMILY TRAGEDY AND AN ALMOST FANATICAL MINIMALISM GAVE RISE TO A LEGEND...

PORTRAIT: **TOM SHEEHAN**

PROLOGUE

IT BEGAN IN RAYLEIGH, ESSEX, AND FROM THE START it was about obsession: an obsession with music shared by Mark Hollis and his older brother Ed, new wave scenester, producer and manager of Eddie & The Hot Rods. Ed encouraged Mark's bands – the Mod-esque The Reaction, then Talk Talk, an intense, anguished entity unjustly lumped in with the New Romantics. But by mid-1986, Ed Hollis was a junkie and Talk Talk – Mark, drummer Lee Harris and bassist Paul Webb, plus producer Tim Friese-Green – viewed the pop industry with disgust. A fourth album due, a voyage beyond the realm of contemporary music had begun, but not all would survive the passage… ➢

Tom Sheehan, Getty

Man out of time: Talk Talk's Mark Hollis was "like a polite anarchist", London, 1991.

ON SEPTEMBER 5, 1986, A CHANCE meeting took place in Highbury, London.

Tim Friese-Greene was in Wessex studio that afternoon. He was sitting at the Bösendorfer piano when Phill Brown sauntered in. Brown was killing time, waiting to collect some tape copies of Hand Of Fate by Paul Roberts, what he suspected would be the last single he would ever record. "I was about to leave the business," he remembers, "I was running market stalls and things."

TALK TALK
SPIRIT OF EDEN

Up to that point, Brown's track record in the '60s and '70s had served him well. As a teenage tape op at Olympic Studios, he'd worked with everyone from Jimi Hendrix to The Rolling Stones, before going on to engineer artists including John Martyn and Roxy Music. He had continued to do well in the '80s, working with artists including China Crisis, but he was losing interest, and work was drying up. "I hated most of the music in the '80s," he says, "this kind of new digital sound, sampling drums bigger than they could ever be in life… I just hated all that."

> “MARK HAD AN INSIGHT. **HE WAS A PAIN IN THE ARSE**, BUT HE WAS **MORE RIGHT THAN WRONG**.”
>
> PHILL BROWN

The conversation between Friese-Green and Brown was short. The pair had briefly worked together on Tight Fit in 1982 but had not seen each other since. Having loved Talk Talk at their recent Hammersmith show, Brown remembers praising Friese-Greene for his success. "I was just being honest really. I congratulated him on [Talk Talk's 1986 album] *The Colour Of Spring* and also said, 'Man, that's the kind of band I should work with!' I was almost thinking out loud."

When Talk Talk got back from touring in mid-September, Brown got a call from the producer asking if he wanted to meet Mark Hollis. A date was set for November 6 in a pub near Friese-Greene's house in Stanmore, north London. In his book Are We Still Rolling?, Brown describes this first meeting in some detail: "Mark was about 5 feet 9 inches tall – thin with an angular face and shoulder length, light brown hair. He was dressed in jeans and a white shirt. He looked like a very regular guy, polite and softly spoken, with a sardonic humour that I warmed to immediately."

Hollis ended up cadging a lift back from the engineer and it was in the late afternoon rush hour traffic that the real conversation occurred, as if Hollis had premeditated it to happen this way. "Mark was just sitting there asking me questions that was in a way much more the interview than what we'd had in the pub," says Brown.

Avalon.red, Getty (2), Kees Tabak/Camera Press, Courtesy of the Hugh Davies Estate and Special Collections & Archives, Goldsmiths University of London/Julian Nieman

As they circled London on the A406 ring road, Hollis pointed out a convenient tube station and Brown pulled up. Climbing out of the car, he turned to the engineer: "He said, 'So what sums up Olympic for you?' and I said, 'It's got to be 1am, November 1967… Traffic.' He just smiled, said 'Bye' and went. I didn't know then, but it turned out that Traffic was one of his hero bands."

Hollis didn't keep him waiting long. In December, Friese-Greene phoned to say that the next album would start the following May and they'd love him to engineer it. Brown was back in business.

TRUE TO THEIR WORD, TALK TALK commenced work on the record in May. On the morning of Saturday 11, road manager Adrian Wiseman unloaded the band's equipment at Wessex. Brown, Hollis, Harris and Friese-Greene began to assemble what they needed in Studio 1. It was decided that Lee Harris's drumkit would be sited in a large storage cupboard. As Brown recalls, Harris felt he needed to customise his domain: "In this pile of stuff that had come from the lock-up there were these sound-activated lights. Lee, just for fun, put them round his drum kit so that when he played, he had lights. And then to get that looking better he turned out a few lights in the studio."

Harris's impromptu lighting snowballed and became an integral part of how the album would be recorded. The drummer added a couple of anglepoise lamps by the piano and guitar amps and then, when all the equipment had been set up, Harris turned out the remaining overhead lights in the live room.

Compared to the atmosphere he had created downstairs, Harris now found the control room lighting too harsh, so he told the others he had an idea. The following day, he appeared clutching a 1960s oil projector, which he set up pointing directly on the mixing desk. Once this was going, he proceeded to turn out all the other lights in the control room.

Brown recalls, "It wasn't like we were going to set up this really dark psychedelic environment, it was just something that naturally evolved. I expected when musicians came in, that we would put up the odd light. But then it just stayed like that! Musicians were brought in with a torch, settled into their area, given headphones, then we'd play them the track."

As well as the visual ambience from the 1960s, it appeared that the period was also to be a template for the recording technology. Brown, speculating on whether Hollis had taken his parting comment about Traffic to heart, thinks that "between Tim and Mark it was very much like, 'Let's find stuff that's old: 1960s, nothing newer than '68 or '69.'"

From the off, it was clear that Hollis and Friese-Green would be setting a bar their colleagues would toil to reach. Rhythm tracks, shared by Harris and percussionist Martin Ditcham, came together gradually. "Lee would spend hours playing rhythms, and it

TALK TALK · THE COLOUR OF SPRING

Talking it up: (clockwise from top left) Webb, Hollis and Harris hit a purple patch, 1986; Dr Feelgood's Lee Brilleaux with (behind) Mark's brother Ed, 1975; Hugh Davies and his Shozyg; the Tim Pope-directed I Believe In You video; (opposite) doing the white thing in '82, with (far left) Simon Brenner.

wasn't obvious to me that he was stressed," recalled assistant engineer Shaun Lambdin in the 2015 book, Spirit Of Talk Talk. "But he'd been moved into a vocal booth which was cramped, hot and dark. It must have been both physically and mentally exhausting."

Humour was the only way to get through it. Lambdin was so amused by the band's sarcastic banter that he recorded some of it. After one take Friese-Greene can be heard rejoicing that, because a particular track is less than 10 minutes long, it stands a chance of being a single. Anyone who attempts a joke is thanked for their "rare flash of humour". For Brown, hearing the recordings again "brought back darker elements. Because it may all seem a bit funny on the surface, but there is this undercurrent, for me, of darkness and sarcasm."

Art director Cally Calloman, who later went on to work with Hollis on his solo album as well as Paul Webb and Lee Harris's '90s project, .O.Rang, was told about the *Spirit Of Eden* sessions. "They were vicious – I think Paul was often the victim of it. There were times that Tim Friese-Greene and Mark would just gang up on people. When I first met Lee, I told him when I heard *Spirit Of Eden* it sounded like a coterie of people who had escaped the world and were making this incredibly self-contained music. He just laughed. He said it was World War 3: one day so-and-so was in; the next day they were out of favour; someone would have the piss taken out of them… It was just nasty. Paul left because of that."

Brown's recollection of the way the sessions took their toll on Webb is similar: "He would come up with these great lines but if Mark or Tim said, 'That's great but instead of a G can you play this…?' he couldn't immediately do it, so he would go away and work it out until he felt comfortable playing it. I think by the time he'd given his all on *Spirit Of Eden*… it was just like, I have no more ideas. And that's when he kind of, in a way, put his bass down…"

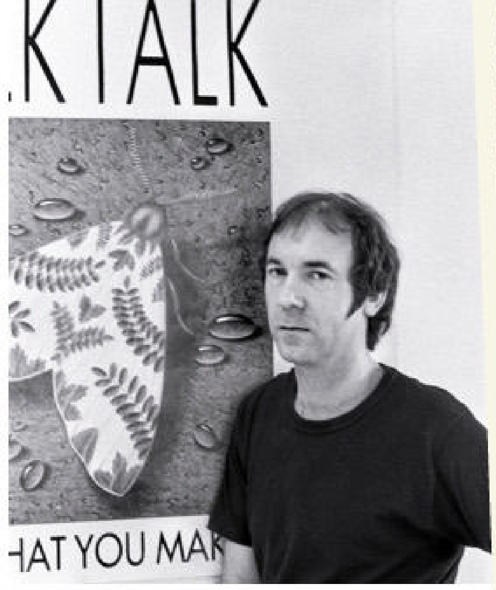
Harmonica player Mark Feltham, a veteran of Nine Below Zero and *The Colour Of Spring*, remembers his work on album opener The Rainbow as "probably the most physically demanding session I've ever played on. Mark wanted the atmosphere to be right. He wrote a big X on the floor and I couldn't move from that area. I was stuck in a position like a bird man, I was bent over. I remember ringing home and saying, 'Christ alive, I've been in the session today and I can hardly move!'"

Everyone worked five days a week, Monday to Friday from 11am to midnight throughout May and June. The band took a break in July, and Hollis returned to Stanningfield – the Suffolk village where he and wife Flick had lived since early 1987 – to put words to the melodies. "Mark was living in the country and so he was full of the country," said Friese-Greene. "It had a very profound bearing on the lyrics."

Perhaps an even more profound influence on the lyrics was that soon after he returned to Suffolk, Hollis became a father for the first time. Flick gave birth to Frederick James Hollis in August.

WITH WINDS AS HIGH AS 86MPH, OCTOBER'S hurricane wreaked havoc along the UK's East Anglian coast as well as Brittany and Normandy, but nowhere was quite as affected as London and the South-East. Despite having escaped the worst of it in Suffolk, Hollis returned to the studio three days afterwards with a storm of his own. He wanted a semitone change on the song Eden, and another track to be extended by four bars.

"Mark wasn't the guy who wanted to know too much about technical stuff," recalls Brown. "He said, 'All right, I'm going off ➢



I'M NOT REALLY ILL I'VE JUST BEEN WORKING WITH TALK TALK
THIRD WORLD WAR
BOB MARLEY WAILERS

Feast of *Eden*: (clockwise from top left) Talk Talk sleeve illustrator James Marsh; *Spirit* engineer Phill Brown; window shopping in 1988: (from left) drummer Lee Harris, bassist Paul Webb and Hollis; Marsh's original 1975 Fruit Tree painting; (front row) Hollis, Harris and Webb with sessioneers (from left) John Hook, Rupert Black and Ian Curnow, London, 1984.

Courtesy James Marsh, Courtesy Phill Brown, Paul Rider, GEMA Images/IconicPix, Getty

≺ to the football, then,' thinking it would be a three-hour job, when in fact it was a three-day job."

Despite the fact that Friese-Greene and Brown found themselves swearing through the frustrating hours, at no point was Hollis's vision questioned. "He had an insight," says Brown. "He was a pain in the arse, but he was often right. More right than wrong."

A sequence of session musician recordings began for which *Spirit Of Eden* has become legendary. Players would be offered tea then escorted into the darkened studio by Lambdin. They would be played the track and given free rein to play whatever they wanted. Because there were eight free tracks on the Mitsubishi 32-track machine (the other 24 tracks being taken up with album backing tracks), each musician would have a maximum of eight passes.

No feedback was given, and no niceties were exchanged after the session. "Mark wouldn't say anything to anyone," recalls Brown. "He wasn't like, 'Look guys, you can do whatever you want'– there was not even that vague bit of information."

The *Spirit Of Eden* credits do not reveal the total number of musicians who played on it, but in several interviews Hollis estimated it was at least 50. What was Hollis aiming for? Was he just winding people up? Brown thinks this was certainly part of it. "He's got a bit of that 'fuck you', like a very polite anarchist… I mean, we pissed off so many people!"

Feltham was one of those who blossomed under Hollis's conditions, as he explained. "I think a little bit of fear about who is running the session makes respect both ways… and got the best out of me… He was incredibly respectful of other musicians – I became a friend after the music was done."

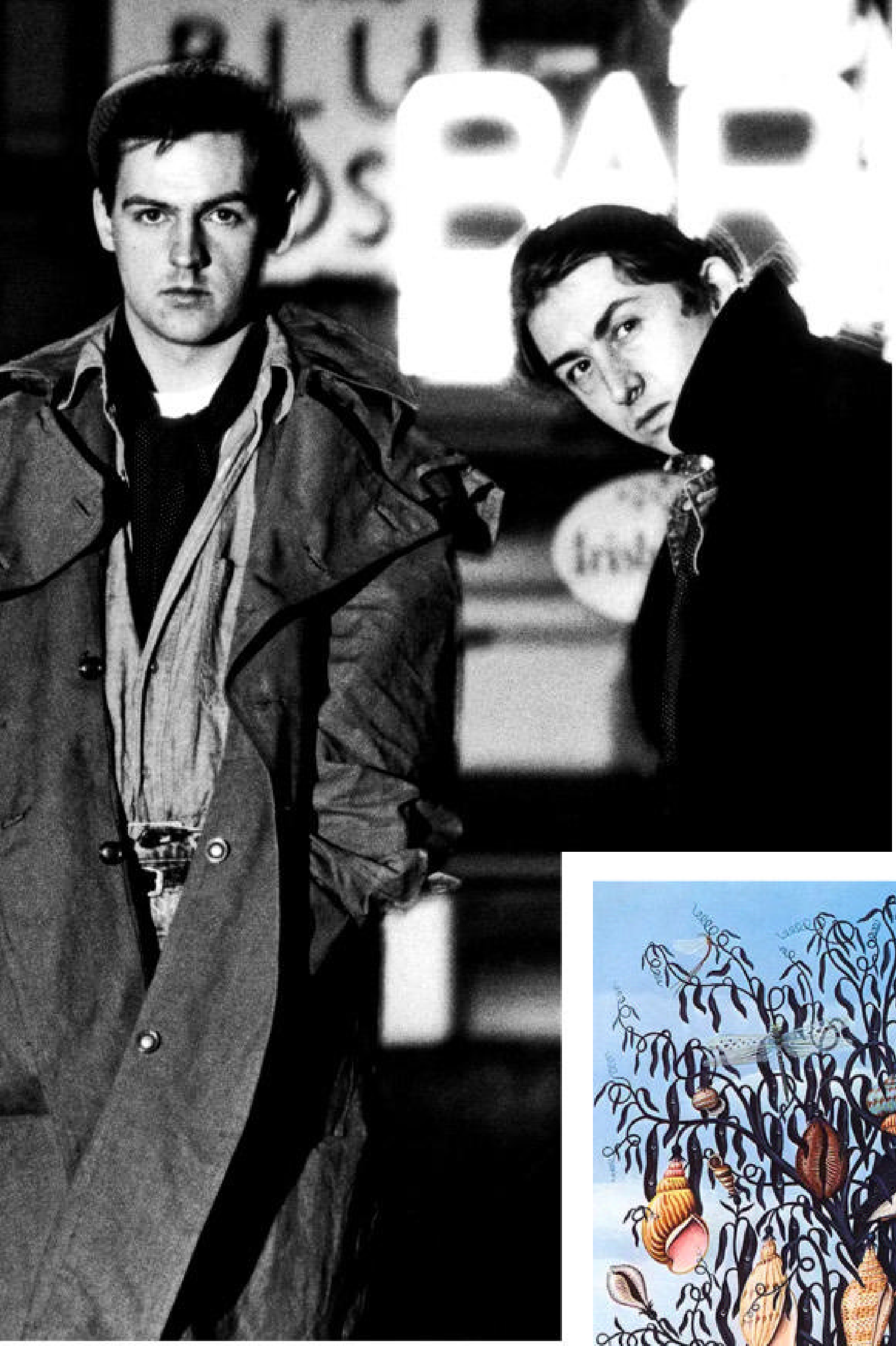
As well as those who felt disgruntled about their playing ending up on the cutting room floor, there were some musicians whose work *was* used, who also felt unhappy. Another *The Colour Of Spring* hand Danny Thompson returned with his double bass but, as Brown recalls, "we did eight takes of a five-minute song and kept three notes." The engineer later heard back that Thompson had described his time in the darkened studio as "the worst session of his life".

Hollis and Friese-Greene now decided they wanted to use an Ondes Martenot – a 1930s electronic instrument, similar to the Theremin. Unfortunately, the 'ondist' they approached turned down the session, so they were forced to return to the Musicians Union directory to see if there was anybody else. It was while they were doing this that they chanced upon Hugh Davies and his creation, the Shozygs.

"This fantastic character turned up with this Heath Robinson egg-slicers-and-metal-bars connected to batteries," remembers Phill Brown. "None of us had ever heard of it, because it's not a real instrument."

The day Davies came to Wessex, the seriousness of the project was tempered by Hollis and the others finding the eccentric musician/inventor amusing, "While he played, eyes closed, he was oblivious to the fact the tape had stopped," remembered Lambdin. "Tim gave a shout of 'NUTTER' before he and the band huddled into uncontrollable fits of laughter. A lot of what he did got used though, so not so mad after all."

Effectively, Hollis was sampling live musicians. After each session musician left, the trio would listen through all the takes and Hollis decided what to keep. Everything that wasn't wanted simply got wiped. "The joke is," says Brown, "that some of the time we would keep the mistakes." One such moment occurred when Friese-Greene tripped over his guitar lead, causing the instrument to crash deafeningly to the floor. "We erased the guitar part but kept the accidental explosion at the end, moving it to a more desired location on the song," says Brown. The following year, Hollis went some way to explaining the rationale: "I don't think technique is



important to music, enthusiasm is, the spirit in which you approach it… the liveness, the ineptitude.”

At the beginning of December, a 25-piece choir was booked to sing on I Believe In You; Brown thought it sounded beautiful but the next day Hollis told him, “It sounds too good – like [1950s BBC radio group] The Cliff Adams Singers. Can you erase it?”

Brown did as he was told but kept a recording of the male choir just in case Hollis changed his mind.

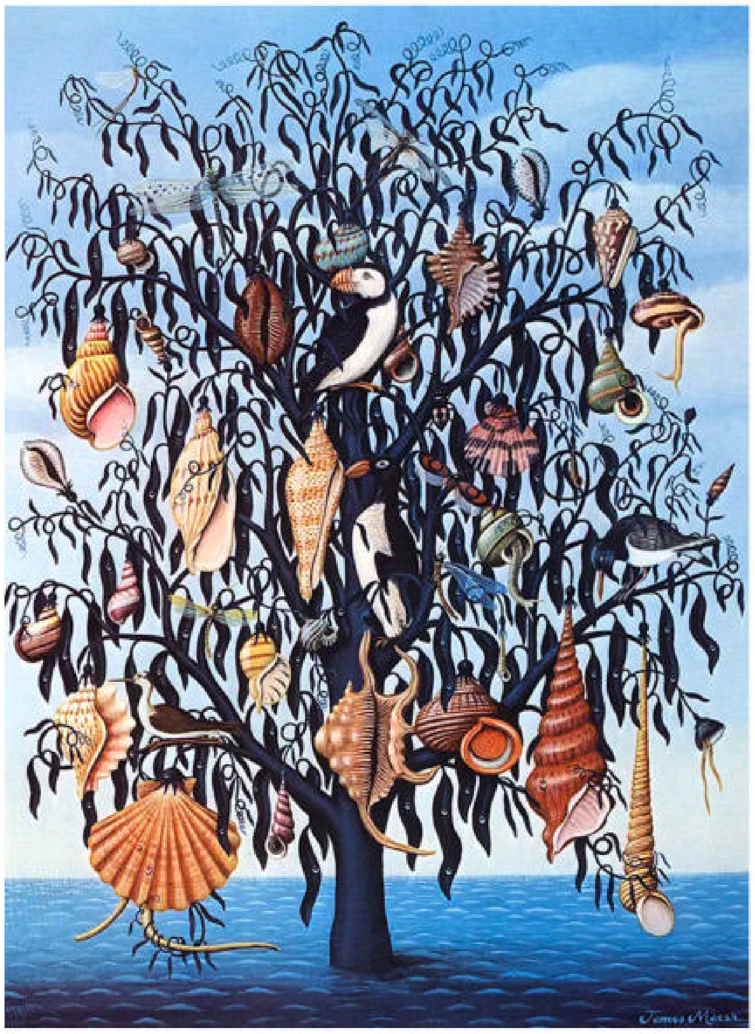
In January the following year the adult choir would be replaced by The Chelmsford Cathedral Choir, made up of 12-year-old boys.

After a short break over Christmas, Hollis, Friese-Greene and Brown reconvened at Wessex on January 4 for mixing and vocals. Compared to the painstaking work and endless months which the instruments had taken to record, Hollis's vocals were put down swiftly – he already had fully-written lyrics, honed over the summer in Stanningfield. Mixing was similarly straightforward. So much of the decision-making about each moment of the album's 41 and a half minutes had already been made; anything unimportant had already been erased.

Friese-Greene travelled to Stanningfield to meet Hollis after the album was finished. They sat in The Red House pub and celebrated. “We thought we'd broken the mould,” he later recalled, “and we could turn the tide of history by going back to a world where the single was not king, and we thought this was the album that would do that.”

FOR A COVER IMAGE, ARTIST JAMES MARSH – ILLUSTRATOR of all the band's record sleeves hitherto – had come up with various ideas based on tracks Talk Talk manager Keith Aspden had played him, as well as some images from his older unpublished work. Amongst the latter was a 16x12” oil-on-wood painting he'd created in 1975 called Fruit Tree. It depicted a tree growing from the ocean, shells growing from its branches, seabirds and dragonflies making it their home: a solitary island of beauty in a drowned world. Aspden took a print away to show to the band. The decision was unanimous, this would be the cover of *Spirit Of Eden*.

Marsh's illustration of “major life forces, the sea and the tree” was a perfect match for Hollis's crystalline melancholy and semi-Biblical lyrics. More than any previous Marsh artwork for the group, Fruit Tree encapsulates the mood of the album. Also, the fact that it was painted 20 years earlier places it – like the music – out of time. As Hollis said later that year, “The ideal thing you could ever hope for in making a record is that it exists outside of any time that it's within. First make the record you want to make and then hope it can operate on a large timescale.”



“THE IDEAL THING **YOU COULD EVER HOPE FOR** IN MAKING A RECORD IS THAT **IT EXISTS OUTSIDE OF ANY TIME.**”
MARK HOLLIS

For the moment, EMI went along with the idea that there would be no single. But in other respects the band's situation with the label was complicated. The commonly held view is that *everyone* at EMI hated *Spirit Of Eden*. In his book, Brown writes that he heard a rumour that the label's new head of A&R, Nick Gatfield “broke down in tears” when he heard it.

Art director Cally Calloman was doing some freelance work for EMI at the time and found himself in marketing man Tris Penna's office. He remembers a pile of promotional *Spirit Of Eden* CDs sitting on the floor next to his desk. “They didn't know what to do with it. I remember Tris saying, ‘Can you let me know what you think of this?’ I phoned up the next morning – total fanboy – saying, ‘This is probably one of the greatest albums of the decade,’ and [I remember] Tris saying, ‘You're the first person to talk positively about it.’”

The truth is that many within EMI genuinely loved Talk Talk. In an unprecedented move for a record company executive, general manager Tony Wadsworth even spoke to the press on behalf of the band. “When I heard it first in its finished form,” he told Q magazine, “I thought, ‘Mmm, this is interesting,’ then got into it very quickly.”

NEVERTHELESS, KEITH ASPDEN was keen to break with EMI, arguing that the label had failed to pick up their option to extend Talk Talk's contract. EMI disagreed and legal proceedings would rumble on for the rest of 1988 and into 1989. “I was fearful the money wouldn't be there to record another album,” said Aspden. “I had to get them out of that deal. Then people said we'd delivered *Spirit* specifically to get out of it, which is ridiculous.”

Only a handful of people in A&R and EMI's business ➢

Tape rolling: Hollis in the BBC Paris Studio, February 10, 1982; (below) Ben Wardle's new biography.

MUSIC
LABORATORY

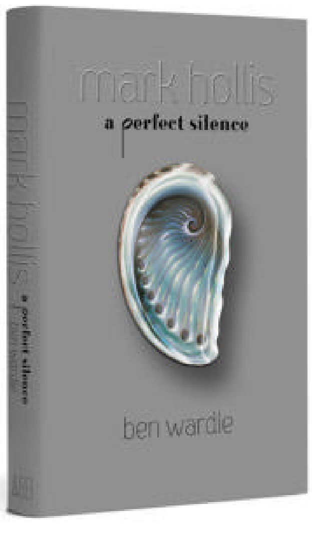
⋖ affairs department knew about the contractual dispute. To the rest of the company, it was business as usual. As EMI set out its official line for the record – "An album for 1988" – a release date of September 12 was set.

A press biography was commissioned and, in July, a writer travelled to Stanningfield to interview Hollis for it, getting the singer to open up in a way he rarely did about his parents, his education and the wilderness years between The Reaction and Talk Talk. Hollis talked up his new life in the country: "There's a community here. You go in a shop and, rather than sticking their hand out for money, they want to talk. It's human."

The opening is particularly insightful. It recounts an incident Hollis had recently had in a pub where he had noticed a sign on the door: 'No punks and no skins allowed.' Leaving his pint on the table, he told his friends that he was stepping outside and would be back in a minute. He went and got a haircut – he'd been planning to get one anyway at the end of the recording, but he told the barber to give him a buzz cut. Returning to the pub, he was refused entry despite pointing out his friends and pint inside. Hollis noted the absurdity that someone "should think you can change personality in the course of drinking a pint because you've had your hair cut".

> "PEOPLE SAID WE'D DELIVERED *SPIRIT* **SPECIFICALLY TO GET OUT OF OUR RECORD DEAL**, WHICH IS RIDICULOUS."
>
> KEITH ASPDEN

The writer uses the story to illustrate Hollis's astute self-analysis: "A lot of things I've done are a reaction against, rather than being in line with what's happening around me… this album is quite definitely a reaction against what's going on in music at the moment."



Promotional plans for the album began to take shape. By mid July Hollis compromised over the single – he would oversee an edited version of I Believe In You and Tim Pope would direct a video. In August, Hollis mentioned they were looking at making a film to accompany the first side of the album and hoping Pope would direct it. With hindsight, promoting *Spirit* as a cinematic experience seems obvious; it would have immediately placed the album in a context in which the music could breathe, as well as make it clear that Talk Talk were now operating on a different level. Possibly down to cost or more likely because it was simply too extreme an idea in 1988, the film never happened.

Inevitably I Believe In You did not get much radio traction, but EMI promotions man Steve Hayes did manage to get Hollis an extended interview with DJ Richard Skinner, who was hosting a midnight show of album-oriented music on BBC Radio 1. Throughout the interview, Hollis is polite, modest and good-humoured: when Skinner suggests that recording *Spirit* had been expensive, Hollis responds, "Yeah, I think it cost more than 30 quid."

Indeed, despite a dispute with EMI and an album that was clearly not going to match its predecessor in sales, Hollis appeared more at peace with himself than he had ever been since the early days of the band. There is a moment towards the end of the interview when Skinner asks the singer what his ambition is and he confesses, "Well, I don't have any ambition. You see, I already have what I want."

On September 18, *Spirit Of Eden* entered the UK album chart at a respectable 19. It never went higher. The next week I Believe In You made it to 85. Tim Pope's elegantly lit film catches the atmosphere of the song, with the new short-haired Hollis, eyes closed as he strums an out-of-frame guitar. For fans used only to seeing the singer in shades, it made a definitive statement – Hollis the pop star was gone.

PERHAPS BECAUSE IT HAD A certain rock'n'roll currency, its reference to heroin was highlighted in EMI's press release for I Believe In You. Dutch magazine Oor managed to get Hollis to open up a little bit more about the lyric. "I've seen the misery that heroin can cause," he said. "I've known so many people who thought the stuff would never get hold of them and end up with a totally ruined life."

Perhaps Hollis was worried about a decline in his brother Ed's health over summer 1987, as he wrote *Spirit*'s lyrics: the reference to heroin and the description of wasted youth can be read as a plea. The song Eden may also refer to the brother whose musical guidance was so important to Hollis; as he sings on the refrain, "Everybody needs someone to live by."

Ed had now spent a decade addicted to heroin. "He was in a poor way," remembers school friend Andrew Sims, who visited him in the mid '80s at his terraced house in Thundersley, Essex. "Obviously, the drugs had taken their hold, he had sores on his arms which weren't healing, and he'd been in hospital for a time. He said to me that he was scoring off the guy who'd supplied Jerry Garcia over here. Where he got the money for it… is a mystery to me."

On May 9, 1989, Ed Hollis died of gastric poisoning. He was 37. A fortnight later, on Tuesday, May 23, the EMI dispute was finally concluded. By the end of the day's appeal hearing, a previous ruling in the label's favour had been reversed. The battle was Talk Talk's. They were free.

EPILOGUE

Talk Talk signed to Universal and embarked on *Laughing Stock* (1991), an album that would make *Spirit Of Eden* sound like *Thriller*. But Paul Webb was already gone, and after more epically painstaking sessions, so were Harris and Friese-Greene. Seven years passed before Hollis's beautiful, self-titled solo album emerged, featuring Talk Talk regulars Phill Brown, Martin Ditcham, Mark Feltham and guitarist Robbie McIntosh. But it would be Hollis's last – as if his music, ever more minimal, had succumbed entirely to erasure. He died in February, 2019 – 30 years after his brother – aged 64. *Spirit Of Eden* breathes quietly on.

Mark Hollis: A Perfect Silence by Ben Wardle will be published by Rocket 88 Books in April 2022 and is available to order only at www.markhollisbook.com.

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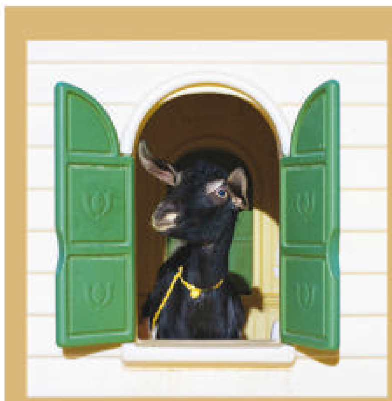

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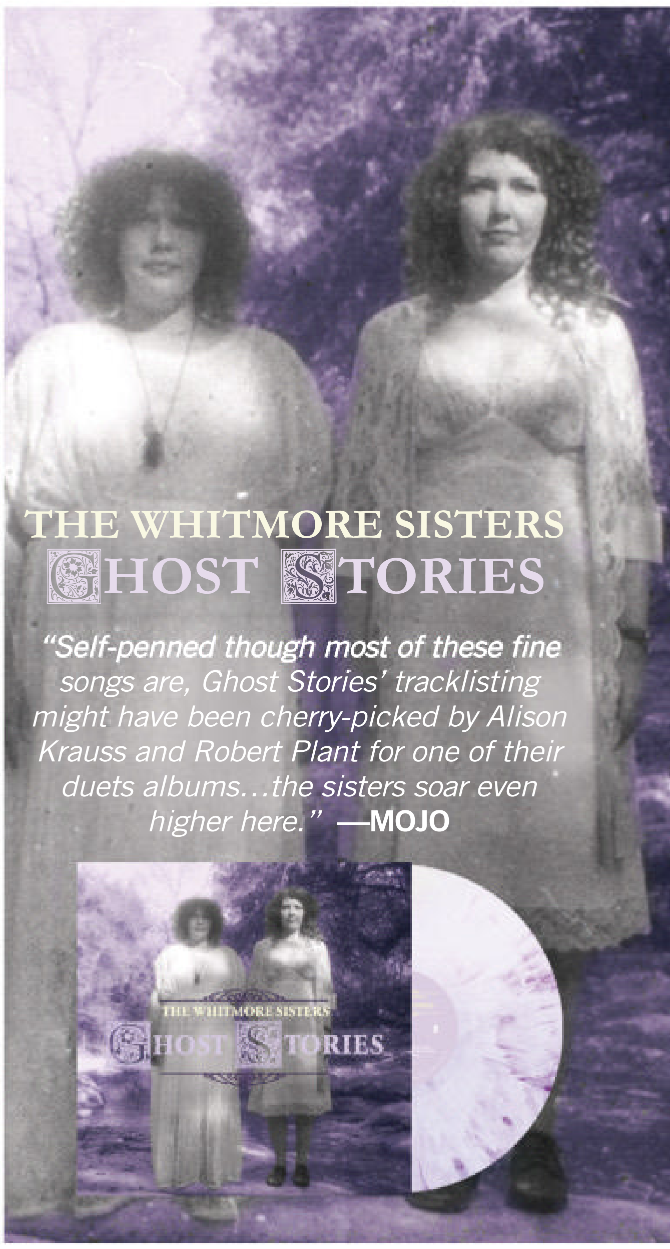

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DARK STAR

MARC BOLAN PRANCED INTO 1972 ON THE BACK OF A STRING OF HITS. BUT AS METAL GURU AND *THE SLIDER* SHOT **T. REX** TO INSANE NEW LEVELS, A COCKTAIL OF COGNAC AND COCAINE, PLUS PREMONITIONS OF DEATH AND DISASTER, WERE SPECTRES AT THE FEAST. WOULD HE END THE YEAR IN ONE PIECE? "EVERYTHING MARC DID SPOKE OF INSECURITY," DISCOVERS **MARK PAYTRESS**.

PORTRAIT: **WOLFGANG HEILEMANN**

IN THE SMALL HOURS OF JANUARY 16, 1972, Marc Bolan, still wearing the sparkling gold jacket he'd worn on-stage earlier that night, was returning home to London in a 1956 Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud 1 driven by his wife June. He'd recently bought the car on the back of Number 1 hits Hot Love and Get It On, naming it 'The White Swan' in honour of the song that had turned his life around the previous winter.

"I'm not into status stuff," Bolan told journalist Michael Wale. He just had a weakness for cars and liked singing about them, from Ford Mustangs and Cadillacs to the girl with the "hubcap diamond star halo" in Get It On that had everyone talking about poetry in pop again. Besides, it was the shape of the Roller that turned him on.

The couple were returning from Boston in Lincolnshire, where T. Rex had just played their first British gig since November. Bolan had pranced, pouted, sat cross-legged for a solo acoustic interlude and urged the band on with warrior cries of "Yeah!" during songs. The estimated 5,000-strong crowd, mostly teenage girls, held up pin-up photos and screamed. Thirty or more fainters were pulled to safety over the crash barriers. At least one ended up in hospital.

"It's like science-fiction," said Bolan, who'd named his band after a line in a Ray Bradbury short story. They were Tyrannosaurus Rex then, back in 1967, and until Ride A White Swan changed everything, including shortening the band's name, Bolan seemed forever tainted with failed Summer of Love idealism. That made success, when it came, all the sweeter. "Like it or not," announced NME in a 'REXMANIA' cover story on the Boston triumph, "Marc Bolan has become the only true rock star of the Seventies."

ROCK. BOLAN LIKED THAT. FOR MONTHS, WHILE the naysayers cried "Sell Out!", he'd insist that his new-look, four-piece T. Rex were creating hits destined to endure alongside classic Who, Hendrix and Beatles 45s. He'd grown tired of cynics mocking his 'Larry The Lamb' voice, of watching underground acts like Jethro Tull and Juicy Lucy play Top Of The Pops while Tyrannosaurus Rex struggled to shake off the '60s. Bolan was bigger than pop.

"He uses Jimi Hendrix as an example of the need to move constantly, musically," Record Mirror's Val Mabbs wrote in July 1971. Bolan also spoke glowingly of the late guitarist's "ability to give something so soulful and personal that it gives [his] music an extra dimension". Describing T. Rex's music in 1971 as 'Cosmic Rock' was another nod to Hendrix.

Late that year, Bolan explained away his pop success by describing himself as "a rock'n'roll poet who's just boppin' around on the side". He knew how fickle pop audiences were, especially since the big names had switched to the LP market, leaving pop at the mercy of ➢

Camera Press/Heilemann

Star and stripes: the self-described "rock'n'roll poet" Marc Bolan in Munich, Germany, February 1972.

≺ studio-based bubblegum acts. Now, that was changing. Rod Stewart and Slade's recent success was partially down to the Bolan effect. And, considering recent developments, The Who's concept album champion Pete Townshend re-evaluated the pop single as "concentrated energy in compact form".

Bolan, who'd emulated Townshend's guitar-lashing antics while supporting The Who in 1967 as part of John's Children, took Townshend's view to be an endorsement. The next Rex single would be "a test", he said, a feet-first venture into pop intensity.

Previous T. Rex hits ran on hooks, melodies and Bolan's breathy vocal seductions. Released the week after Boston, Telegram Sam was as much about the sound: a souped-up, foot-stomping hit factory production that matched Bolan's new resolve. And it was joyful, the sound of Marc Bolan rejoicing in his "main man" status.

While Sounds' Penny Valentine wrote of Sam's "grinning lyrics", others heard only a boastfulness that had been creeping into Bolan's interviews. He certainly had plenty to brag about. The previous autumn, he'd brought in manager Tony Secunda to put his career on a secure financial footing. The big prize was a licensing deal with EMI for the bespoke T. Rex Wax Co. Record label. Now Bolan was a corporate figurehead, his face staring out from every record release. What did he care if a few critics complained that the syncopated Chuck Berry-style guitar had already been employed on Get It On? Chuck Berry had eight songs and Bo Diddley had three. Bolan had been saying that for years. Besides, Telegram Sam was now T. Rex's third Number 1 single and they were off to the States. Before leaving, Bolan told NME journalist Tony Norman: "This year is going to be really exciting. America is just happening for us now. That's the next stage."

Which began in a shower of stars on February 15 at the Hollywood Palladium in Los Angeles. Mick Jagger danced in the wings and Tinseltown's music fraternity warmed to Bolan's energy and showmanship. But the next 12 days witnessed chinks in the armour. Bolan became bombastic in interviews, did what he called his "Marc Hendrix" thing onstage with mixed results, and seemed strangely vulnerable during solo radio performances, not helped by some wonky guitar tuning. This tinge of amateurism had been part of the old Tyrannosaurus Rex charm. But for those Warner Brothers executives who'd banked on electric Rex cracking the live circuit as a Grand Funk Railroad-type act with added star quality, it irked. The tour ended at Carnegie Hall in New York on February 27. "That did it for me," said Tony Secunda. "He got out of his brain, fell flat on his face and [played] so loud you couldn't hear a thing."

US journalists who'd interviewed Bolan back in December when he was over plugging the tour noted a change in him. Secunda blamed bad cocaine and scarpered to Acapulco with Rex conga player Mickey Finn. Bolan returned to London to work on a new set of songs.

Evening Mail
SUPERMARC!

"MARC'S SWIGGING FROM A BOTTLE OF COGNAC AND SINGING, 'I'M AN OLD BOON DOG FROM THE BOON DOCKS.' IT WAS LIKE A SCENE FROM A STAR IS BORN." *TONY VISCONTI*

T·REX
T·REX
TELEGRAM SAM
T·REX

THE CHÂTEAU D'HÉROUVILLE was Marc Bolan's kind of place. Promoting his first single, The Wizard, back in 1965, he'd spun a tall tale about spending 18 months in a black magician's castle, and now he was going to be making his first album as a superstar in a real live one. "For Marc, who was a dreamer," says Dominique Blanc-Francard, the Château's in-house engineer, "it was the perfect place to make music."

But the scene in the limo, taking some of the group from Orly Airport the 40km north to the Hérouville one morning in early March, was inauspicious.

"Marc's swigging from a bottle of cognac and singing, 'I'm an old boon dog from the boon docks,'" remembered *The Slider* producer Tony Visconti. "The leader is out of control. C'mon everybody, sing! It was like a scene from A Star Is Born."

Upon arrival, Bolan discovered that the master bedroom was occupied and demanded the removal of the occupant's belongings. "That," said Visconti, was how *The Slider* began."

Yet, plugged in and ready to work, Bolan was a different man. "He was like an angel dropped from the sky," Blanc-Francard remembers. "He was so strange."

"Marc dressed for the stage when he went into the studio," expounded Visconti, "beautiful in his high heels and his jacket. He'd jump up and down with great enthusiasm and scream into the mike. In his head, he saw 10,000 people in front of him. It was fun, really fun, like going to a T. Rex concert."

Two weeks later, on March 18, that vast imagined audience was for real when T. Rex played two sell-out shows at the Empire Pool, Wembley. Ringo Starr and his Apple Films camera crew were there too.

The previous summer, Bolan had announced plans for a futuristic film about a 'Cosmic Messiah'. He was still floating the idea in January 1972, telling Tony Norman about a "messenger from God" checking up on how Earth was doing. "We will be filming his reaction to all the shit… garbage on the telly and mass murders," Bolan explained. "At the end of the film he's just totally destroyed by the crap he sees."

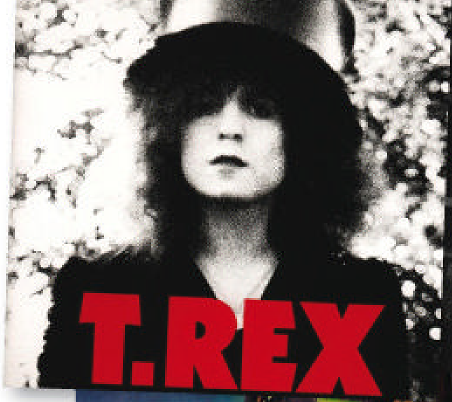
Starr, who regarded T. Rex as legitimate heirs to The Beatles, had another idea – a concert film with wacky interludes.

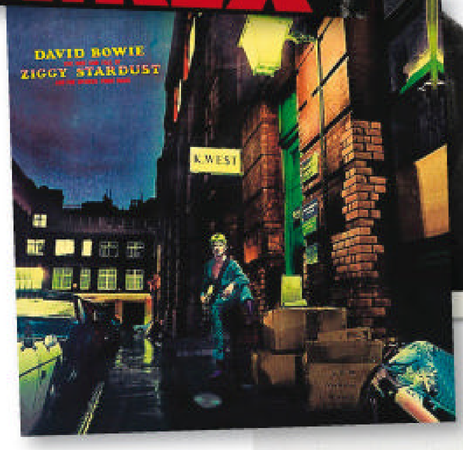
After Wembley – "Bolan's Triumph: The Day That Pop Came Back" roared NME – Bolanmania hit overdrive. Special editions on the news-stands, 'Bolan perms' offered on a unisex basis. The press lapped up his "weird kid" backstory, a rags to riches tale of the clobber-mad youth from the streets of Hackney who became a fragrant superstar. After Rex's 1968 debut single, Debora, re-emerged to go Top 10 in the UK in April, and the first two Tyrannosaurus Rex albums (repackaged as a double) hit Number 1 in early May, Bolan's status as pop's most way-out star was assured.

Metal Guru gift-wrapped the moment. Bolan's opening "Aaaawh yeah-eah!" channelled Beatlemania, and the song sustained its mantra-like high from start to finish. Hitting Number 1 on May 20, ➢

Getty (4), Alamy, Camera Press/Heilemann

20th Century Man: (clockwise from above) Bolan and T. Rex drummer Mickey Finn go walkies; with wife June Child, London, 1972; at Château D'Hérouville while recording *Tanx*, October 23, 1972; getting it on for Born To Boogie, Ascot Sound Studios, Tittenhurst Park, March 21, 1972; "Easy, tiger!" larking about on the same day; (opposite page, top) cover star in the Birmingham Evening Mail, June 1972; 1970's Ride A White Swan and '72's Telegram Sam singles.





< it remained there for four weeks. Once again, critics fumed at Bolan's doggerel – "silver-studded sabre-tooth dream" indeed! – although not everyone in the rock establishment was dismissive. "Metal Guru sounds far more honest than the early Tyrannosaurus Rex stuff," Cream lyricist Pete Brown would tell me, noting that the lyric spoke directly to Bolan's sense of self.

Back in late 1971, Tony Norman had visited the singer in his flat in west London's Little Venice. "On the wall was a big poster, a classic pose of Marc onstage with his guitar," Norman recalled. "I said, Why do you have a poster of yourself on the wall of your living-room? He said, '[Because] if I start to believe I'm that guy, I'll know I'm in trouble.'"

Yet Bolan's ego was increasingly making headlines. He knocked the Stones and John Lennon in print and told The Weekly News he was earning £40 a second. The UK-based Cream magazine responded with a tongue-in-cheek "Hello. I'm Marc Bolan. I'm a superstar. You'd better believe it" headline.

"He had a nice attitude until he believed his own publicity," said Mickey Finn. "That's not a put-down, that's just the music scene."

Meanwhile, Bolan's incertitude – loud and clear on Metal Guru's "Is it true?/Is it you?" couplet – seemed to hide in plain sight.

WHILE BOLAN FIXATED ON THE ROCK STARS HE regarded as peers, Chicory Tip, The Sweet and Slade emerged as frontrunners in a surge of aspiring knights in tight satin seeking pop success. Earlier in the year, US singer-songwriter Don McLean hit big with American Pie, a lament for "the day the music died". But as summer approached, British pop was booming. For the first time since the late '60s, singles were outselling albums. Having ignited the whole powder keg, Marc Bolan, all 5'7" of him, was starting to suffer altitude sickness.

"Marc couldn't stand competition," said Visconti. "He didn't think it was healthy." Back in Tyrannosaurus times, the producer remembered Bolan turning up at his Earls Court flat with two carrier bags of vinyl. "He'd play a track, say, 'It's crap. Next!' and throw it on the floor. He felt in competition with people he didn't even compete with. He wasn't even famous yet."

But now there was a rival to treat more seriously. The July 15, 1972 issue of New Musical Express hailed cover star David Bowie as "Britain's High-Priest Of Camp-Rock". Starman had just entered the singles chart. The LP, *The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars*, had gone Top 10. And there was a prestigious Rainbow show and a US tour up ahead. Was Bolan's long dreamed-of ascendancy already in the balance? "They said Dave Clark was going to top The Beatles," he griped the following week. "It's as bullshit as you can possibly get."

"HE'D BUILT UP A CHARACTER THAT HE WAS TRYING TO LIVE UP TO AND DIDN'T WANT TO SHOW ANY SIGNS OF WEAKNESS." *TONY VISCONTI*

For months, Bolan had observed his old friend prowling menacingly: from Bowie's big-league RCA deal struck in New York in September 1971 and the headline-grabbing "I'm Gay" announcement in January '72, to the costume drama that was the snowballing Ziggy Stardust tour, promoting a record that hadn't been released yet.

And there were unignorable similarities. Starman's acoustic/electric format, refined by a small string section, was straight out of the *Electric Warrior* style book. So too were phrases such as "hazy cosmic jive" and letting "all the children boogie". On Top Of The Pops, Bowie even squeezed in an arbitrary reference to Get It On.

Bolan had been pickpocketed. The Sorcerer's Apprentice who once warmed up Tyrannosaurus Rex audiences with a mime piece about the invasion of Tibet had turned predator. "Boley struck it big and we were all green with envy," Bowie later confessed to MOJO's Paul Du Noyer. "The only way I could learn was to see how other people did it. I wasn't one of those guys who came out of the womb like Marc. I wasn't dancing, I was stumbling around."

"It's telling that David Bowie broke through by playing a part," Tony Norman told me. "Marc was a character. He'd light up a room as he walked in. Bowie wasn't like that."

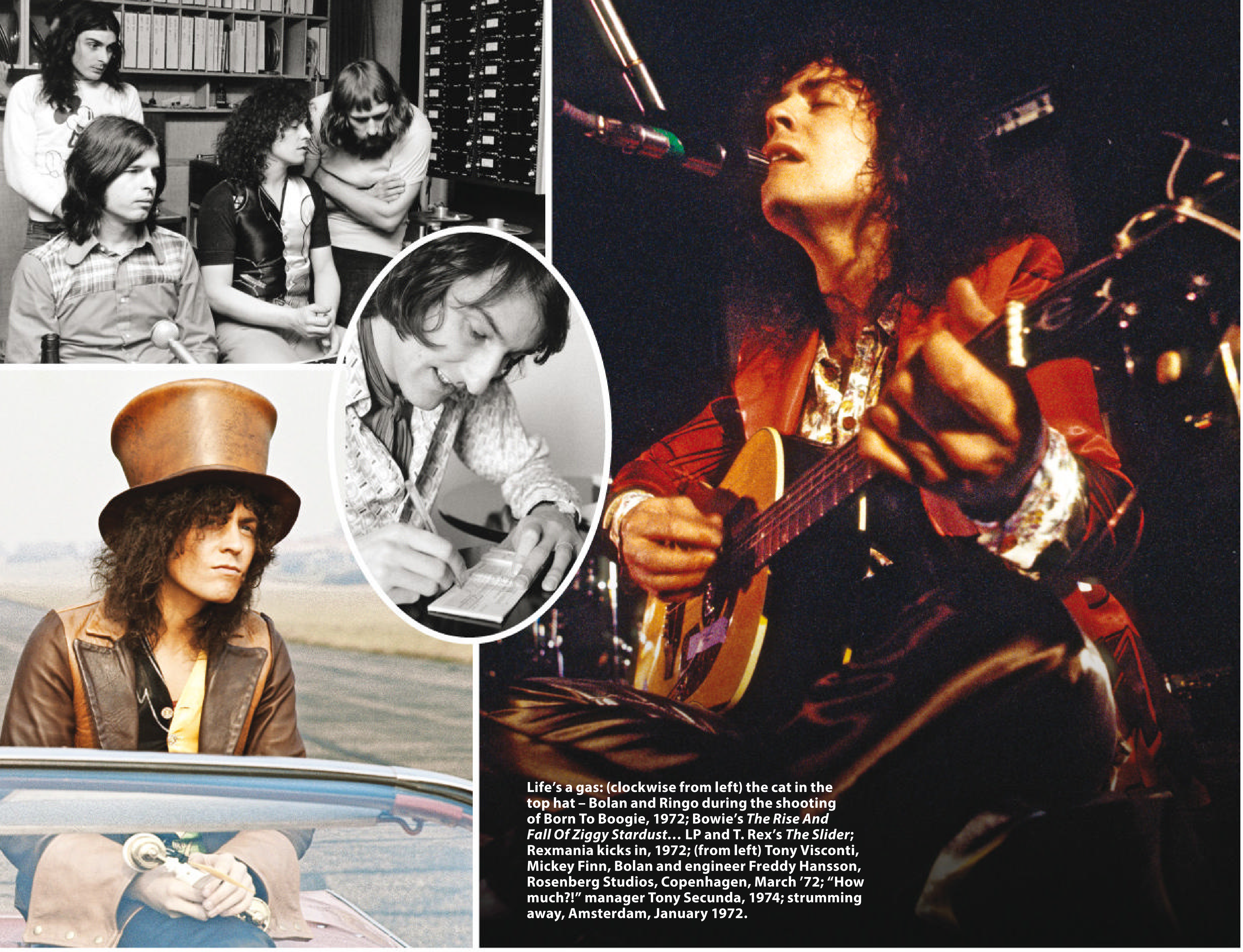
Released on June 16, *The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars* was greeted as a masterpiece. Strangely, no one mentioned that its vague narrative, concerning an alien redeemer finding himself on a planet Earth five years from self-destruction, bore an uncanny resemblance to Marc Bolan's junked 'Cosmic Messiah'. How would the Bopping Elf respond?

IN EARLY JUNE 1972, LISTENING BACK TO THE finished master of the new T. Rex album, Tony Visconti smiled. "I thought, We really got it this time. Everything we learned on *Electric Warrior* we did better on *The Slider*."

Yet the rock press heard only formulaic repetition and runaway ego. NME's Charles Shaar Murray, who'd backed Bolan during his 'Cosmic Rock' transition period, led the charge. "Marc is just not trying," Murray claimed. "Now he's just ripping off his own clichés."

Certainly, recent T. Rex records had doubled-down on a

Getty (4), Barrie Wentzell



Life's a gas: (clockwise from left) the cat in the top hat – Bolan and Ringo during the shooting of Born To Boogie, 1972; Bowie's *The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust…* LP and T. Rex's *The Slider*; Rexmania kicks in, 1972; (from left) Tony Visconti, Mickey Finn, Bolan and engineer Freddy Hansson, Rosenberg Studios, Copenhagen, March '72; "How much?!" manager Tony Secunda, 1974; strumming away, Amsterdam, January 1972.

trademark style. During the *Slider* sessions, Dominique Blanc-Francard remembers Visconti telling him, "I can get the sound of T. Rex in any room in any city in the world." And Bolan *was* recycling riffs. Baby Boomerang and Metal Guru B-side Thunderwing both echoed the Beltane Walk hook from the 1970 *T. Rex* album – itself a lift from Jimmy McCracklin's late-'50s hit, The Walk. But the accusation felt churlish. Most rock was built on borrowed treasure.

Today, Tony Visconti regards *The Slider* as Bolan's key work, not least because it's the one that best expresses the contradiction that lay at the heart of him. "He'd built up a character that he was trying to live up to and didn't want to show any signs of weakness. But he'd put all that in his songs. The spirit that comes through is vulnerability. Only a true artist would create something like that."

Promoting the album, released on July 21, Bolan confessed: "I've never cried so much in my whole life as this last year."

"Half the songs are a dialogue with something unseen," said Visconti. "Marc was so psychically open." The producer is still disturbed by the line in Ballrooms Of Mars where Bolan sings of nights when "monsters call out the names of men".

"I've taken a lot of drugs myself in the past and I remember unlocking things I wished I hadn't seen. Demons play as much a part in his psychic awareness as angels do."

The Slider ends peacefully. "I think Main Man is a euphemism for God," Visconti says. "It's a prayer. God, are you still on my side? Are you going to look over me?"

Ziggy Stardust had been stagey, detached, thrilling. A good half of *The Slider* was an open book of golden teardrops, a duality that Bolan ensured was reflected in the artwork, via its 'from behind' photo on the back sleeve. The front cover was striking – Bolan as 1972's cool cat in the top hat. Yet the grainy, bleached-out image also suggested a silent screen androgyne about to be cancelled by the coming of sound.

Given that Bolan's heroes were generally of a kind – Hendrix, Syd Barrett, James Dean, Nijinsky – he'd been expecting trouble in paradise. Asked if fame had changed him, Bolan said, "You just get sadder. You see more pain and suffering… You end up disliking yourself."

WHEN T. REX KICKED OFF A SHORT, FOUR-CITY tour at the Birmingham Odeon on June 9, Sounds' Howard Fielding noted Bolan's "unconvincing smile [and] a hint of boredom in his hip-shaking". He predicted both star and audience would soon tire of each other.

On-stage, Bolan could barely hear himself. Live recordings from this period are peppered with his cries of "Monitors!" Away from the hysterical crowds, his inner voice grew louder with feelings of persecution and paranoia.

Prior to the tour, the Bolans had relocated to an exclusive high-rise flat in Bilton Towers near Marble Arch. Fitted with all mod cons, there was little trace of the bohemian baggage that had accompanied them on their journey from dossing down in June's Commer van parked on Wimbledon Common in 1968 to no-expense-spared living. Pride of place on the walls now went to two erotic paintings by Syd Barrett's old flatmate Duggie Fields, Bottled and Fingered.

The couple spent much of the summer at the flat. Occasionally, the Roller – now fitted with black tinted windows – had a run-out to Twickenham Studios where Ringo was finishing work on the film, which had been given the title Born To Boogie.

Grilled by the NME, Bolan admitted he was "becoming a recluse". "When I first married Mary [Hopkin, in 1971], Marc used to come to dinner and we'd play records and jam on guitars," Visconti says today. "Then he closed off and sat in his ivory tower."

Since Tony Secunda's departure in March, there had been a rapid turnover of friends and associates in the T. Rex world. ➢

BOOGIE WONDERLAND!

TEN GEMS FROM PEAK REXMANIA, PLUCKED FROM THE UPCOMING *T. REX: 1972* BOX SET. BY *MARK PAYTRESS*.

SUNKEN RAGS

(B-side of Children Of The Revolution)

The original acoustic demo of this dig at Ladbroke Grove's freak fraternity – among them original Rex man Steve Took – invoked a Pink Fairies song ("ride on, fight on") and, ironically, ended up on the *Glastonbury Fayre* LP. Backing vocalists Flo and Eddie fine-tune this band version.

TELEGRAM SAM

(Previously unreleased Top Of The Pops version)

Telegram Sam did for the language of pop what Magritte did for pipes and apples: ultra-vivid sensory delirium. While a homage to Tony Secunda, "automatic shoes" and "corkscrew hair" place Bolan firmly at the song's centre.

MAIN MAN

(Radio session, KDAY-FM Santa Monica)

The studio Main Man resonates with fragility. But in a February 1972 version taped for US radio, Bolan lets the song take him to all sorts of places, namechecking main men Elton John and Jimi Hendrix as he strums himself into reverie.

SPACEBALL RICOCHET

(Live At Wembley: the Evening Show)

Intimacy was key to Bolan's appeal which is why, even during peak Rexmania, there was always an acoustic interlude mid-set. 1972 highlight Spaceball Ricochet "just tears your hair out," says Visconti. "'I know I'm small, but I enjoy living anyway.' Killer lines!"

THE SLIDER

(from The Slider)

Built around a lusty, crunchy guitar, this title track speaks both of Bolan's struggle to belong ("All schools are strange") and nature-boy spirit ("the cosmic sea"). Has a devastating chorus: "And when I'm sad, I slide".

RABBIT FIGHTER

(from The Slider)

There's a lot of Big Apple here: violence, corruption, superheroes, Moondog. "One of the most beautiful things he's ever recorded," says Visconti, "a three-minute pocket symphony." An exquisitely lyrical Bolan guitar solo and Mark Volman crooning falsetto on the fade virtually steal the show.

BALLROOMS OF MARS

(from The Slider)

Rich in symbolism, this deep cut is a meditation on transition – though for day into night, read loss of innocence. Bolan's methods may be inscrutable, but autobiography is rarely far away. John Lennon gets a namecheck.

JITTERBUG LOVE

(B-side of Children Of The Revolution)

Powered up by Bolan's Screaming Bird treble-booster pedal, this boppin' burst of rock'n'soul is pure treasure. The chorus is feverish; Bolan's snatched guitar break a nod to Eric Clapton's 'woman tone'.

LEFT HAND LUKE

(Radio session, WBCN Boston)

The epic that would give *Tanx* its rousing, gospel-rich finale was previewed acoustically by Bolan on US radio in September 1972. It's a remarkable recording, a phantom-like Rock'n'Roll Suicide, with Bolan's extreme, 1967-vintage warble resurrected for the final verses.

CHARIOT CHOOGLE

(Born To Boogie mix)

Having Bolanised a word magicked up by John Fogerty (1969's Keep On Chooglin'), Marc and the band summon up a deliciously wonky rhythm that's more Beefheart than bubblegum. "Choogle sounds like bagel!" says Visconti. "He wasn't dead serious about everything."

All the above are on T. Rex: 1972, a 5-CD box set released by Edsel on April 22.

Kieron 'Spud' Murphy, who'd shot the *Electric Warrior* cover photo and poster, told Bolan he wasn't overly keen on Metal Guru. "That was it," he recalled. "I was cut out of the magic circle."

Packing up his DJ box at the end of the June tour, Bob Harris never saw Bolan again. Even June Bolan demanded more of a back seat role, bringing in old friend and NEMS booking agent Tony Howard to manage Bolan's day-to-day affairs.

Re-emerging in late July for Russell Harty's late-night TV chat show, Bolan was by turns truculent, nonchalant and lively. Most of all, he was a hair-tugging, chair-swivelling bag of nervous energy. He spoke of troubled late-'50s singer Terry Dene, deadpanned "tough" at the prospect of becoming a dustman if his pop career fell flat and insisted he wouldn't make old bones.

"He said that in other interviews too," Visconti told me. "I thought, Come on, this is just playing to the crowd! But it might be one instance where Marc saw something and felt the only way to deal with it was to communicate it."

Having spent several weeks apart, T. Rex regrouped at the Château for four days at the start of August to work on a new album, *Tanx*, to be released the following March. "It was a fearful time," said the producer. "You didn't know if you were next in line for the firing squad. But Marc was such a wonderful thing to be part of that everyone swallowed their pride and stayed."

Bolan arrived with his usual cache of material, some fully sketched out, others just fragments. "The songs weren't as good," Visconti says. "[*Tanx*] was a paint-by-numbers LP in many respects."

One captured mid-'72's bittersweet mood. Highway Knees, a verse and chorus played twice, was a lament of sorts for a lost love – one who couldn't or wouldn't stay on the road with the song's narrator. In early September, that's where Bolan was too – back in the States where Get It On (retitled Bang A Gong) had peaked at 8 in Billboard in the spring. He claimed to Creem's Dave Marsh that "one TV show with T. Rex in America, it would be all over," but the band's drawn-out versions of their hits didn't go down well. Two prospective TV appearances were cancelled. Support act The Doobie Brothers took most of the plaudits. And Bolan was spinning out of control. After one troublesome show, "Marc wandered off down a corridor, fell down on his knees and banged his fists against a radiator," remembered T. Rex drummer Bill Legend.

To pile on the pain, Bowie was touring at the same time, earning more 'Star Is Born' headlines and picking up extra bookings that would keep him in the States until December.

Back home, the new T. Rex 45 launched a counter-strike. Children Of The Revolution was Bolan's My Generation: a glory-seeking siren call to the dancefloor driven by a bombastic, Beethoven's Fifth-type riff. The song would be the big set-piece in Born To Boogie, with Ringo and Elton John sitting in for added star power. But the single stalled at 2. Melody Maker's Chris Welch saw it as a victim of pop's whirlwind time frame: "If the song had been released a month ago it would have been a cert Number 1."

BOLAN WAS STILL BRITAIN'S MOST VISIBLE POP FACE. But with The Sweet and Slade now joined by Gary Glitter and fast-rising US import David Cassidy, competition was fierce for magazine front covers. New titles Popswop and Music Scene were launched to meet demand.

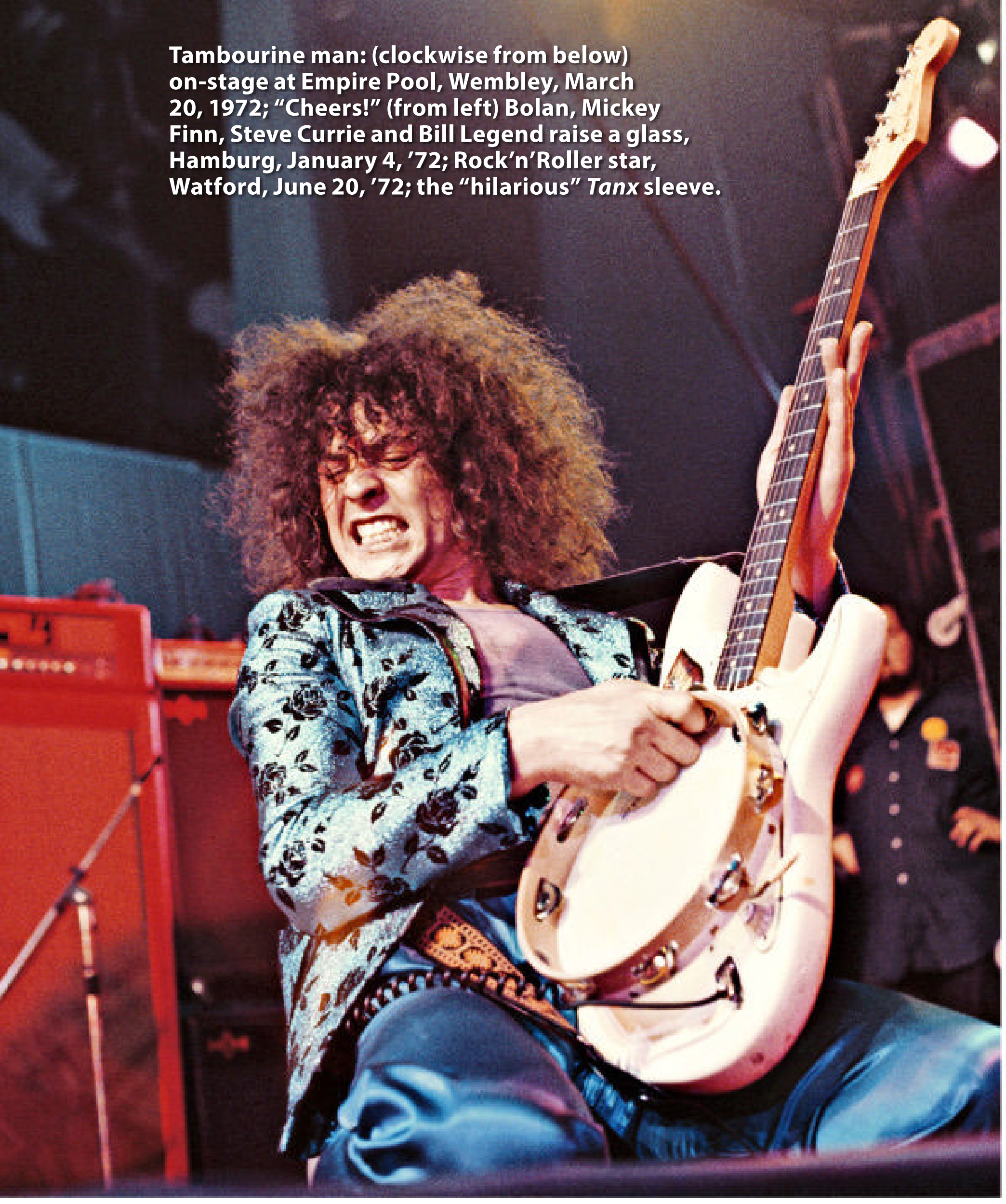
Bolan feigned disinterest. Back from the States, he was reading Paul Oliver's The Story Of The Blues and considering adding a pianist and gospel backing singers to T. Rex. He believed in anti-stars now, he told Disc's Rosalind Russell. "I've always been honest with people, and we've never contrived anything. Possibly that's why it became so big. Some people whom I could mention, but won't, are in my opinion, slightly contrived."

Bolan was now virtually running on autopilot. "I feel like I've gone beyond the point of a nervous breakdown several times in the last few months," he told NME journalist Keith Altham in October. "What happens is that you end up functioning quite normally."

Solid Gold Easy Action, released in December, reflected that state of mind perfectly. The basic riff had been busked into existence by the band back at the Château. As Bill Legend

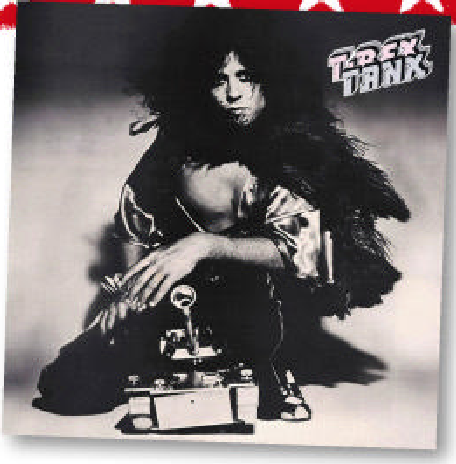
The joy of Rex: Bolan with his trusty Gibson Flying V, '72.

Getty (3), Alamy



Tambourine man: (clockwise from below) on-stage at Empire Pool, Wembley, March 20, 1972; "Cheers!" (from left) Bolan, Mickey Finn, Steve Currie and Bill Legend raise a glass, Hamburg, January 4, '72; Rock'n'Roller star, Watford, June 20, '72; the "hilarious" *Tanx* sleeve.

"I FEEL LIKE I'VE GONE BEYOND THE POINT OF A NERVOUS BREAKDOWN SEVERAL TIMES. WHAT HAPPENS IS THAT YOU END UP FUNCTIONING QUITE NORMALLY." ***MARC BOLAN***



remembered it, Bolan told them to keep playing, left the room, then reappeared 10 minutes later with the finished lyric.

"A metaphor like 'foxes from a tree', that's magic," says Visconti. "That's pulling words out of a hat and putting them together like no one else can. People try and imitate his imagery. You can't. It's uniquely his."

By late 1972, with the new pop era solidifying around the term 'glam rock', the Rex effect was everywhere. Everyone seemed to sparkle up and find their own take on the 'Bolan Boogie'. But only Bolan and Bowie spoke of art, and only Bolan of poetry.

"His poetry was beautiful, and I regard him as a great poet," Visconti says. "In some ways, it was better than David's. David was kinda telling stories based on real life. Marc's were more supernatural."

Bolan was still critical of his multi-tasking rival. "He's still very much a one-hit wonder, I'm afraid," he told NME's James Johnson. According to Bowie's friend George Underwood, whose artwork on the *My People…* album cover did so much to mythologise Bolan, that didn't work both ways. "David always talked about Marc with great affection," he says. "You got the impression he really liked him and his music. But I never thought David copied Marc at all."

Neither was Bowie motivated by doing Bolan down. "I can't say that David was ever insecure," Visconti says. "But Marc was. Everything Marc did spoke of insecurity."

In December, when Donovan visited Bilton Towers, he found his one-time acolyte absorbed in two battery-operated Tyrannosaurus Rex toys he'd brought back from Japan. "They puffed out talcum powder and made horrific reptilian noises while they battled on the glass table," Donovan recalled of the monstrous face-off.

Another visitor to Bilton Towers that month was Apple's Creative Director John Kosh. Bolan had decided he wanted to motor into the new year not in a Rolls-Royce but astride a toy tank.

"I wasn't thrilled with the concept of him sitting on that thing," says Kosh, a fellow East Ender who would art direct the *Tanx* sleeve. "Marc of course thought it was hilarious, this huge dick…"

BOLAN'S STAR WOULD NEVER RISE higher than it had in 1972. He would not, for instance, enjoy another UK Number 1 single, nor would US success come any closer. Yet March 1973 saw the release of one of his greatest achievements: not *Tanx*, but the one-off single, 20th Century Boy, laden with mind-crushing guitar and the soaring backing singers he had envisioned the previous autumn. And while he struggled to transcend the glam moment he had almost single-handedly conjured into existence, the progress of his career from 1973 to his tragic death in 1977 was peppered with feisty counter-punches. For all the feyness of his elfin image, reflects John Kosh, here was a man who'd fought tooth and nail since 1964 for every ounce of success he'd achieved.

"When we discussed how to put the [*Tanx* cover] image across," says the designer, "there'd be a grin or a smirk when he realised what he was saying was absolute rubbish. He was a barrow boy! That's why he got on with Ringo. They both had a similar fight to get there."

At the same time there was more to Bolan's sense of mission than mere self-aggrandisement. Something that's preserved in his music.

"He had the East End upbringing, and was a tough kid," says Tony Visconti. "But he had all this spirituality at the same time. Where that comes from, I don't know. Marc's not of the East End, he's something entirely different."

Mark Paytress's latest book, Glam! When Superstars Ruled The World, 1970-74, is published by Omnibus Press in July. Check out George Underwood's art at www.georgeunderwood.com

MOJO PRESENTS

Dormant for over a decade, PORCUPINE TREE are back, in defiance of the 'p' word's "kiss of death". But with mainman Steven Wilson's sonic skills in such demand among prog's nabobs, could their catholic and engaging new album also be their last? "There's no guarantees," they tell TOM DOYLE.

Photography by **ALEX LAKE**

IT IS 1986 AND IN THE SATELLITE TOWN OF HEMEL HEMPSTEAD, 24 MILES NORTH-WEST of London, the 19-year-old Steven Wilson is a home-recording obsessive, creating a private sonic world in his bedroom, working on a 4-track made for him by his electronics engineer father. Inspired by Gong, Hawkwind, but mainly XTC's psychedelic capers as their Dukes Of Stratospheár alter-egos on 1985 mini-LP, *25 O'Clock*, Wilson starts to imagine himself as the leader of some fictitious progressive rock band.

Giving them the suitably strange and mythical name Porcupine Tree, he conjures up a line-up in his mind (Timothy Tadpole-Jones, Sir Tarquin Underspoon, Mr Jelly), along with a backstory hinting that some of the members might have spent time in prison.

Wilson now accepts that, as a teenager, he was out of step with the '80s. "I dreamed of this era when creativity and ambition were encouraged," he says. "And the more kind of eccentric you were, the better it was."

Porcupine Tree's first album, the wackily-titled *Tarquin's Seaweed Farm*, released in '89 on cassette only, began to filter out to eager kindred prog heads, surprising its creator. "Porcupine Tree was this fake band because I didn't think anyone would be interested," Wilson avers.

Cut to 21 years later, and Porcupine Tree are very much a real band, and one that Steven Wilson isn't sure he wants to be in any more. On-stage at the Royal Albert Hall in October 2010, Wilson knows in his mind that, after this gig is done, he's breaking up the group.

"It didn't feel good on-stage," he says. "I think there was a sense that it was running out of steam." For him, there was also a feeling of frustration that in more than two decades, while the band had slowly accrued a devoted cult following, they'd struggled to make any wider impact. People around Wilson were forever telling him that the band's next album would be the one to connect to the mainstream.

"I said, No… for 10 fucking albums I've been hearing this," he recalls, tensing with the memory. Wilson's fears about Porcupine Tree having grown terminally listless were confirmed to him when he had to salvage three tracks from the Royal Albert Hall show for the band's 2012 live album, *Octane Twisted*. ➢

Alex Lake

Root and branch: Porcupine Tree (from left) Gavin Harrison, Steven Wilson and Richard Barbieri.

"I'LL LISTEN TO THE CARPENTERS AND THEN THROBBING GRISTLE. I THINK THAT DOES GO INTO OUR MUSIC."

Steven Wilson

≺ "You could hear it," he winces, before his face spreads into a grin. "We ended up having to do so much tarting up, just to make it sound less like a fucking knees-up in a morgue."

FEBRUARY 2022, AND 12 YEARS ON, Porcupine Tree are back in action. At AIR Studios in Hampstead, Steven Wilson stands at the microphone, overdubbing his vocal over a live-played backing track of the frenetic, shapeshifting Harridan, the lead single from the band's upcoming return album, *Closure/Continuation*. Today the three current members of the group – Wilson, along with drummer Gavin Harrison and former Japan keyboardist Richard Barbieri – have been performing together in the same room for the first time in those dozen years, filming tracks for a video promo.

"You're through to the next round," deadpans Barbieri from the mixing desk at the end of Wilson's take. "And the sing-off with Fish."

Half an hour later, the trio huddle with MOJO around a table in a Turkish restaurant. Together, we address the unavoidable fact that in the past decade Steven Wilson has always talked down the idea of ever getting the band back together, at one point dismissing it in an interview as a "terribly backward step".

"I never read his interviews," Harrison quips.

"I read 'em," says Barbieri, who joined Porcupine Tree in 1993, the point where they became more than a Wilson solo project. "Yeah, it's not great when you read them. I probably was the most disappointed when we didn't continue, because I'd been through that with Japan."

"The thing about it being a backward step, I do still stand by that," Wilson states in his defence. "But I think the difference is that we haven't made a record that sounds like a stereotypical Porcupine Tree record."

Even if tagged 'prog' and fond of creating long tracks with a conceptual bent, Porcupine Tree have always been a far more restless musical proposition than that label suggests, moving through ambient, metal, trance and math rock. Back in the mid '90s, Radiohead and Porcupine Tree were spoken of as heirs to Pink Floyd, yet one band was accorded rather more column inches than the other. Was their music actually that different?

"Well, the difference was that they came from the alternative rock background," Wilson points out. "Whereas I came from bedroom prog rock. So, I'm The Prog Guy."

It's clearly a term that still sticks in the band leader's throat. "I never use the word," he stresses. "The struggle has always been to try and go beyond that. I always say we're a conceptual rock band."

Adam Taylor (3), Getty (2), Avalon, Carl Glover

BACK IN 2002, HOWEVER, WHEN PORCUPINE TREE signed a major deal with Atlantic and recorded their seventh LP, *In Absentia*, in New York, the first thing the label did was put them out on an American arena jaunt opening for Yes. "It was a grim, grim tour, I'm afraid," Harrison remembers.

"Yes fans didn't even want to hear new Yes music," Wilson says. "Let alone hearing a new band."

"We thought they were a pretty interesting new prog band at the time," Yes guitarist Steve Howe tells MOJO later. "I don't think our audiences were any cooler to Porcupine Tree than any other [opening] act that we've had *(laughs)*."

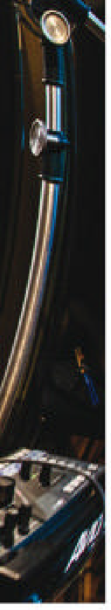
"It seemed on paper like it made a little bit of sense," Wilson adds. "'Oh, y'know, the Yes audience, they're gonna be really open-minded.' No. The last thing a progressive rock fan wants is progress."

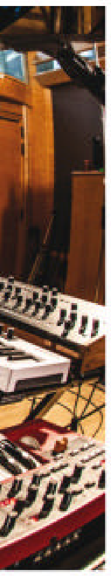
Five years later, however, a new, distinctly prog-shaped parallel career opened up for Steven Wilson. Having earned a Grammy nomination for his 5.1 surround sound mix of the Tree's ninth album, *Fear Of A Blank Planet*, he began receiving invitations from more seasoned musicians to give their back catalogue albums a similarly spacious update. His client list soon included King Crimson, Jethro Tull and Yes.

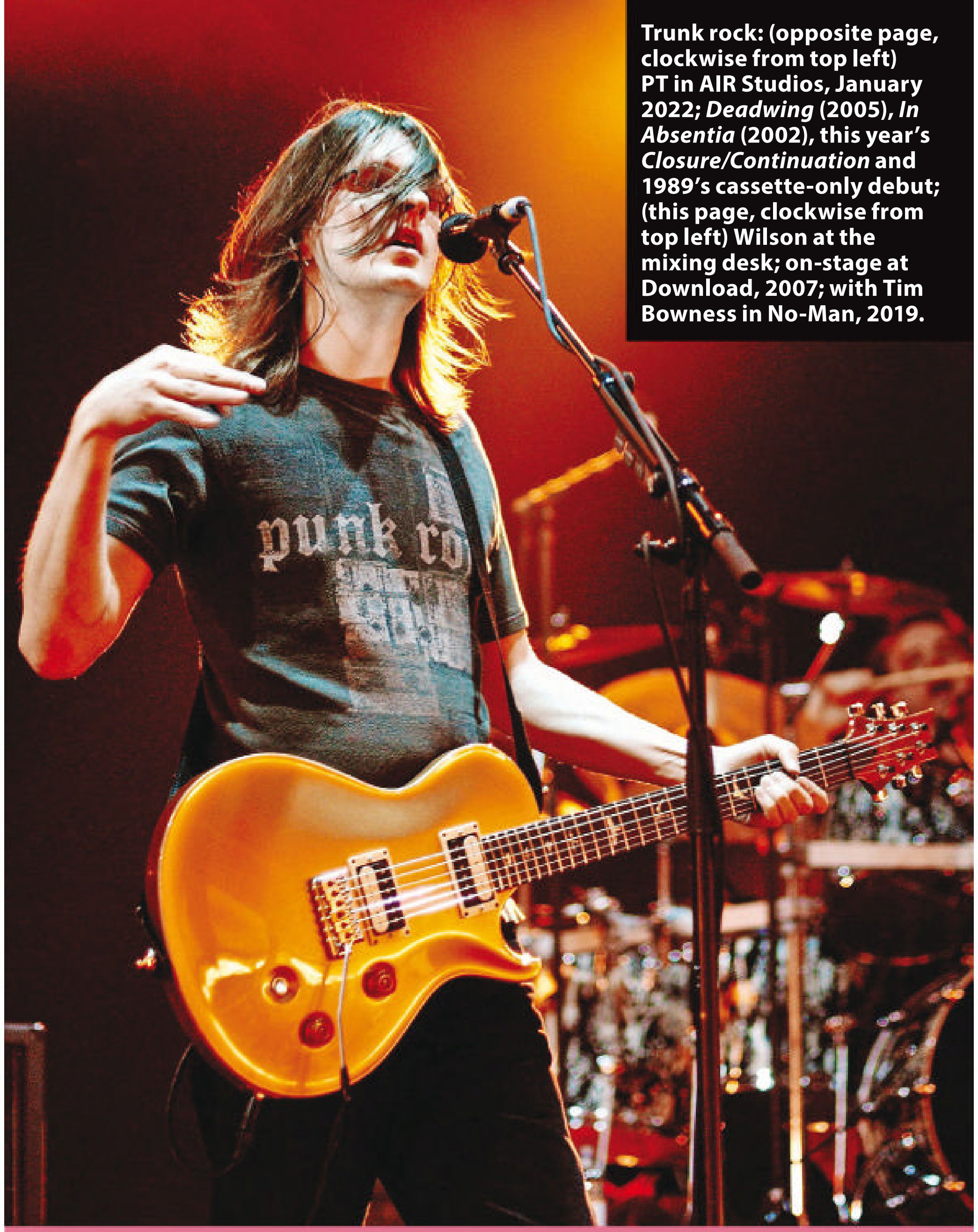
In some instances, Wilson's painstaking 5.1 mixes made the artists re-evaluate their past work more favourably. A case in point being Robert Fripp and the angular, wigged-out jazz-rock of King Crimson's third LP, *Lizard*.

"He'd used a lot of local British jazz musicians," Wilson says of Fripp, "and they just shat all over the music in

PORCUPINE TREE
play
"Tarquin's Seaweed Farm"







Trunk rock: (opposite page, clockwise from top left) PT in AIR Studios, January 2022; *Deadwing* (2005), *In Absentia* (2002), this year's *Closure/Continuation* and 1989's cassette-only debut; (this page, clockwise from top left) Wilson at the mixing desk; on-stage at Download, 2007; with Tim Bowness in No-Man, 2019.

this kind of free jazz way. It's so dense with ideas that it almost strains to come out of the stereo. In surround, we were able to be more painterly."

"It enabled me to listen to the music through Steven's ears," Fripp will tell MOJO. "I was able to hear the music again because of Steven, and I began to engage with it."

Steve Howe was similarly impressed by Wilson's stereo and 5.1 treatments of Yes's five-LP run spanning 1971's *The Yes Album* to '74's *Relayer*. "I think everybody does 5.1 in their own way," Howe says. "It isn't about flashy, whirling, twirling panning going on all the time, because that would just be distracting. It's about good positioning that's more subtle, so the breadth of the music can expand."

Once again wary of being painted into a prog corner, Wilson was happy to take on mix commissions from others, including XTC, Tears For Fears and Roxy Music.

"To be a progfather of his generation will take Steven's career to a certain level," Fripp reasons, "but then there is the risk it'll stop there. I would rather use [the term] 'art-rock' than progressive rock, and I loathe the term 'prog' *(sighs)*. For me, that's the kiss of death."

ON THE EVIDENCE OF *CLOSURE/CONTINUATION*, Porcupine Tree are indeed better described as an art-rock band than as a prog one. The twisty time signatures and nifty-fingered musicianship remain, but it also features dreamy balladry, metal funk riffing and otherworldly vocal treatments. Much like the often jazzy, electronic-rooted solo records Steven Wilson has made in his decade-plus away from the band, its jump-cut arrangements spotlight the band leader's creatively fidgety nature.

"The fact is that I will listen to Abba and then I'll listen to Merzbow," he stresses. "I'll listen to the Carpenters and then Throbbing Gristle. And I think that does go into the music."

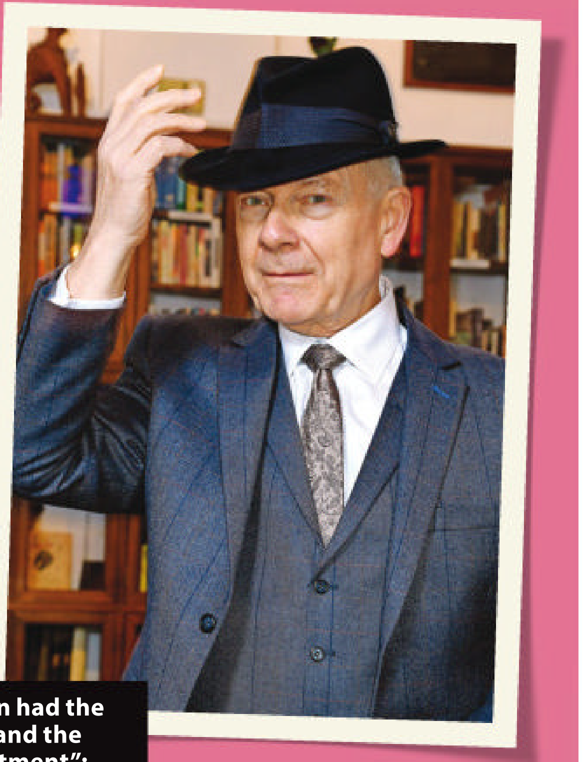
Despite the creative latitude he insists the band allows him, Wilson suspects that *Closure/Continuation* may well be the last Porcupine Tree album. Hence the open-ended title. "I'm happy either way," says Barbieri. "If this is closure on it, then I'm happy."

"I have a hunch that if you want to see the band live, you might want to see it now while you can, because there's no guarantees," Wilson teases.

At the same time, he's clearly grateful that, nearly four decades after he invented a make-believe band, the time-served, flesh and blood Porcupine Tree are finally getting long-overdue recognition. "At times it's been grudging," he concludes, "but there's this respect now for what we've done." Ⓜ

"They Were Being Very GENEROUS"

Robert Fripp on Porcupine Tree, and Wilson's iconic remixes.



"Steven had the chops and the commitment": Robert Fripp doffs his hat to Wilson.

"FIRST OF ALL, Steven was in No-Man with Tim Bowness. I was approached as a session guitarist to play on their album [1994's *Flowermouth*]. We recorded it in Steven's parents' front room, near Bourne End. They wanted me to sound like the guitar solo on Sailor's Tale from King Crimson's *Islands*. But it was a very good, very fun session. And I was very happy and very pleased to be working with a younger generation of players.

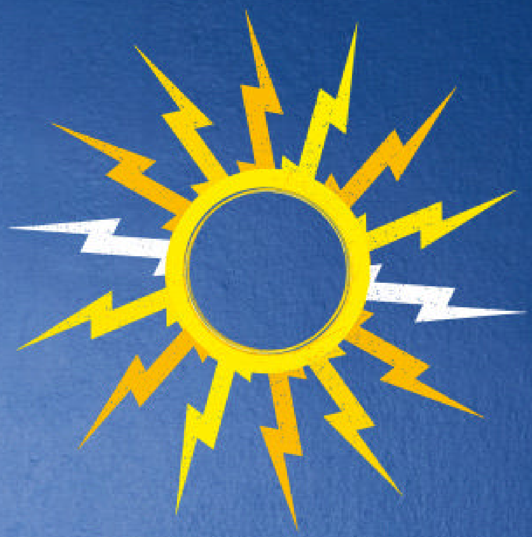
I supported Porcupine Tree with [Fripp's recurring instrumental project] Soundscapes on both an American tour and an English tour. I think they were being very generous and supportive of an older musician, because basically Soundscapes weren't at all popular. With Porcupine Tree's audiences, there was a little more latitude. Instead of active booing, most of the audience would simply go to the bar.

Whenever a new technological format came forward, I would look to reposition King Crimson within it. When Steven expressed an interest in bringing the catalogue up to date… well, he was the man that actually had the chops to do it, and the commitment. He knew the music, and he knew the new technology way beyond someone of an older generation.

Steven's approach when engaging with the catalogue is to reproduce it exactly as per the original but using current technology. My approach is slightly different in that not all the original moves, for example, in the mix, were actually what might have been intended. So, I would be more available to [change the originals] than Steven would. And in some cases, he simply overrode me. He said, 'No. This is the classic.'

Steven gets out of the way of the music he's mixing. This is not Steven Wilson's Mix Of King Crimson. This is King Crimson mixed by Steven Wilson. This is so rare, to deal with someone who gets themselves out of the way."

Eclectic warrior:
Jack White at Third Man Records, Nashville, January 21, 2022.



ALL MY COLOURS

ONCE IT WAS BLOOD RED AND SNOW WHITE. NOW SULPHUR YELLOW AND ELECTRIC BLUE. THE LIVERY CHANGES BUT ONE THING DOESN'T: **JACK WHITE** DOES NOTHING BY HALVES. TOUTING NOT ONE NEW ALBUM BUT TWO, HE INVITES MOJO TO HIS XANADU TO TALK FASTING, TROLLING AND CELL PHONES, JACKO, MACCA AND THE STONES. AND THE QUESTION IS ASKED: IS THIS REALLY A BETTER, STRONGER, *NICER* JACK WHITE?

"EVERYTHING I'M DOING RIGHT NOW IS ALL REBIRTH," HE TELLS **GRAYSON HAVER CURRIN**.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **TOM OLDHAM**.

Tom Oldham (thanks to Lighting Assistant James Hole and Film Processing by Abby Johnson)

WHEN JACK WHITE GOT THE CALL SAYING HE WAS NEEDED on national television, he knew it was time to start fasting again. It was the first full week of October 2020, seven months since the World Health Organization declared a pandemic. After video captured Morgan Wallen partying *sans* mask and making out with strangers, NBC's Saturday Night Live – still the US's marquee musical spotlight – scuttled the young country star's scheduled appearance at the last minute. What's more, Eddie Van Halen had died a day earlier. Saturday Night Live needed a guitar hero, and fast.

On Wednesday morning, four days before the broadcast, the show's creator, Lorne Michaels, rang White's Nashville landline. If the network's private jet landed there on Friday, could White play on Saturday? He didn't hesitate.

"It's like vaudeville – 'Hey, some guy broke his leg. Get out onstage,'" White tells MOJO, almost jumping out of an overstuffed chair in his Nashville office. "I love scenarios where you're forced to create. When the chips are down, something inside of me goes with this gut feeling about how to attack."

As one of 10 children in his family's crowded Detroit home, White religiously taped Saturday Night Live. He'd appeared on the programme three times since The White Stripes debuted there in 2002, the fresh-faced and mop-haired singer writhing across the stage in shirt-to-shoe red. In the decades since, he says, "They have become a little like family."

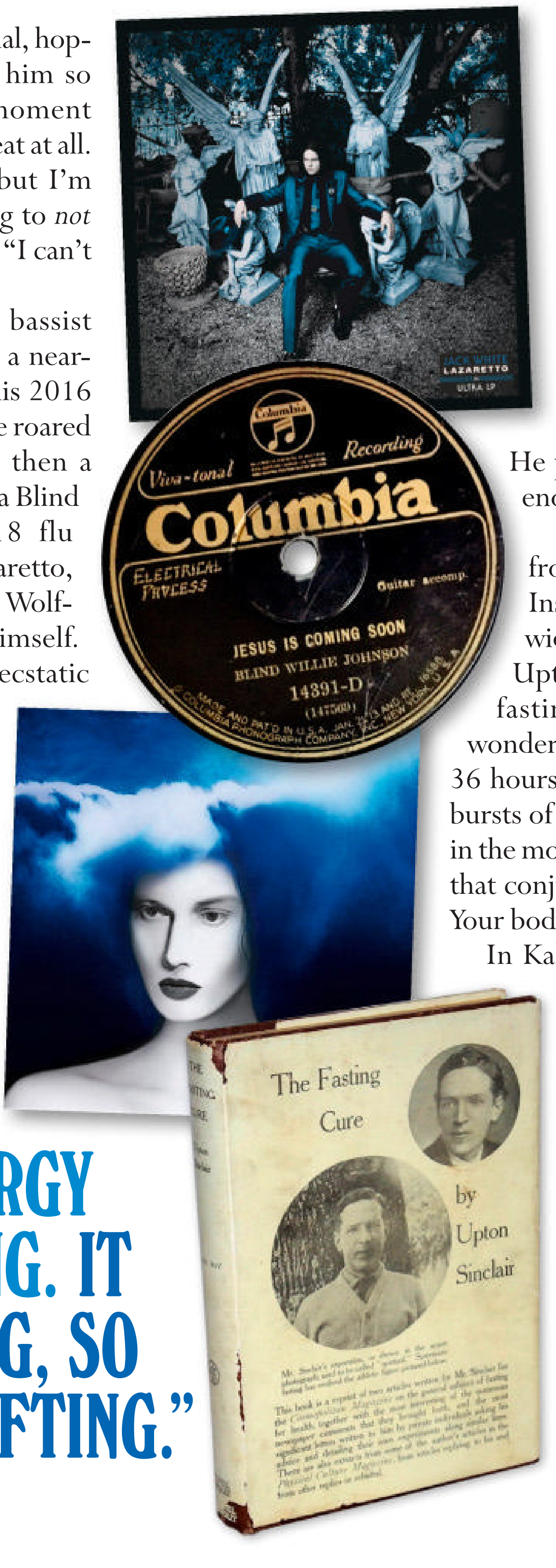
White, then, wanted to try something special, hoping to harness the same energy that made him so memorable 18 years earlier. From the moment Michaels rang until curtain call, White didn't eat at all.

"You've got two days to rehearse. OK, but I'm going to make it even worse – I'm also going to *not* eat," he says, eyes bright above a broad smile. "I can't help myself."

Flanked by drummer Daru Jones and bassist Dominic Davis, the short-notice set seemed a near-atomic release. Beginning with a version of his 2016 Beyoncé collaboration Don't Hurt Yourself, he roared into The White Stripes' Ball And Biscuit, then a rapturous rendition of Jesus Is Coming Soon, a Blind Willie Johnson standard about the 1918 flu pandemic. He later squealed the solo of Lazaretto, the title cut from his 2014 album, from a blue Wolfgang guitar designed by Eddie Van Halen himself. Social media lit up like fireworks, as if the ecstatic primitivism of those 10 minutes offered notice that neither White nor rock were dead.

Frankly, a revival was overdue. White's erratic 2018 album *Boarding House Reach* had flopped. His long-abusive relationship with the media and fellow musicians had turned him into the butt of jokes, or, as he puts it, "easy pickings". He wanted to start again.

"I enjoy extreme circumstances," he says. "My brain goes, 'I'm going to come out of this a stronger, bigger, better person.'"



"I HAD THE ENERGY FROM THE FASTING. IT WAS EXHILARATING, SO INSPIRING AND UPLIFTING."

Tom Oldham (5), Getty

To announce this phase with a symbol of renewal, his longtime girlfriend, musician/beautician Olivia Jean, dyed his hair electric blue. "Everything I'm doing right now is all rebirth."

THE TIMING OF WHITE'S TELEVISED REANIMATION could not have been better. For the first six months of the pandemic, he'd made no new music. He didn't want to get excited about songs only to have them languish in lockdown or production pauses.

He'd focused instead on the upholstery hobby he assumed would be his career until The White Stripes catapulted. He designed the Texas headquarters of Warstic, the baseball bat company he co-owns. He plotted another branch of his Third Man empire, a canary-yellow storefront near London's Carnaby Street. "I wasn't missing for creativity," White says. "It was happening every day."

But in September, a month before Saturday Night Live, White retreated to his other home in Kalamazoo, Michigan, a mid-'50s masterpiece of glinting glass walls and straight lines designed by modernist icon George Nelson. He prowled the music stores, buying a guitar and enough digital gear to muster a makeshift studio.

At the start of 2020, White eliminated sugar from his life and shifted to a whole-foods diet. Inspired by The Fasting Cure, a 1911 book (since widely debunked) by American political firebrand Upton Sinclair, White started experimenting with fasting to tap energy reserves that, at 44, he wondered if he even had. His fasts expanded – a day, 36 hours, two days – and combined with oddly timed bursts of physical exercise. "I was riding my bike at five in the morning," he says – smiling at the image he knows that conjures. "Your body's telling you to go find food. Your body's *prepared* for this."

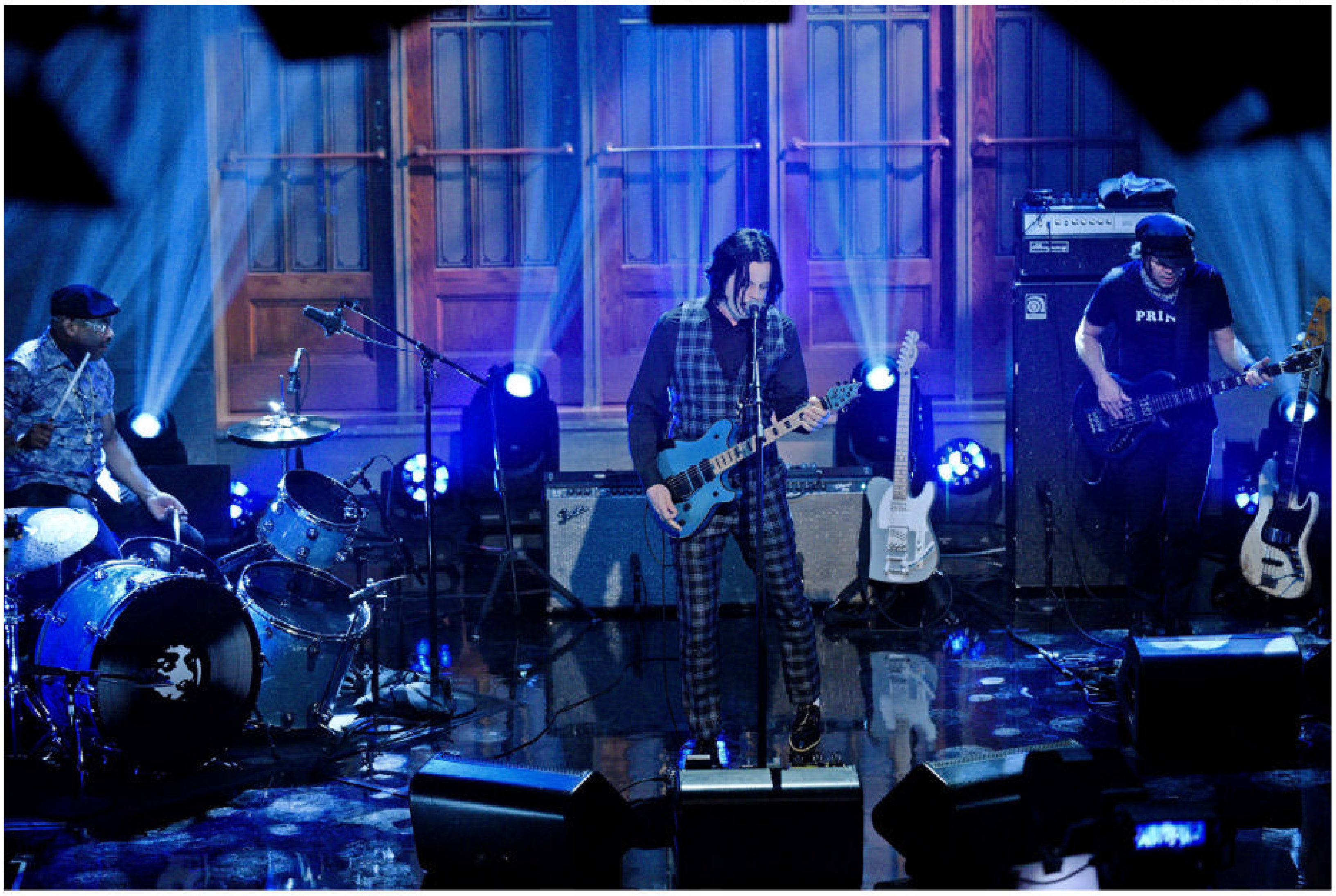
In Kalamazoo, for the first time in at least a year, songs began pouring out during a five-day fast, White's longest. The experience, he recalls, was electrifying, as if he'd unlocked some atavistic essence via starvation. When Lorne Michaels's call came, White wanted to know how that feeling might work on live television, without a net.

"I had the energy from the fasting and how bizarre everything was," says White (due to social distancing rules he could only interact with the show's cast at the end of the broadcast). "It was exhilarating, so inspiring and uplifting after that long break. It still is."

The experience unleashed a spell of ➢

RING BELL
FOR SERVICE

THIRD MAN
ARCHIVE



20 10 6 3 1 0 1 2 3
I'M KINDA BROKEN
-LEFT METER :(

THIRD
MAN
LIVE

Fast worker: White, amid the cogs and wheels of his Third Man HQ; (above left) ripping up Saturday Night Live with Daru Jones (left) and Dominic Davis, October 10, 2020; (insets, opposite) 2014's *Lazaretto*; Blind Willie Johnson's Jesus Is Coming Soon; 2018's *Boarding House Reach*; Upton Sinclair's The Fasting Cure.

< writing and recording so productive that White will release two very different albums this year – the futurist rock manifesto *Fear Of The Dawn* in April and the roots-and-blues survey *Entering Heaven Alive* in July. For White, they represent twin attempts to age with the vim that made him famous while maturing with a depth that might make him more than a punchline.

He flashes back to That Black Bat Licorice, the wicked little love song from *Lazaretto* in which he daydreams about prison, hospitals, the army barracks, or "any place where there's a time to clear my vision." He's hoping the last few years were exactly that.

"The lockdown was like if someone had broken my leg and I had to be laid up for six weeks," says White, his deep-set brown eyes now bulging. "Wow, thank you for breaking my leg! Now I'm going to write things down I wouldn't have ever written down before."

JACK WHITE'S WORLD CAN SEEM LIKE A SERIES OF actualised childhood fantasies.

Situated on a gently sloping seven-acre spread 15 minutes from his downtown office, the only Nashville home he's ever owned suggests an epic adult playground. There's a bowling alley inside, while two of Harry Bertoia's Diamond chairs, spray-painted in the White Stripes schema, serve as ad hoc bleachers for an outdoor basketball-and-tennis court. White tried raising four white peacocks on the lawn, but they escaped into neighbouring yards.

On the concrete driveway gather an armada of motor vehicles – including a Jeep pickup truck, an antique red Bronco and a forest-green Tesla. Red pillows dot a white front-porch swing, alongside an enormous pair of nautical binoculars.

For White, though, the property's prized possessions seem to be a row of small buildings in the back yard, home not only to the studio where he cut his new albums but also Third Man Upholstery. His face radiates as he walks between its yellow tin ceiling and yellow wooden floors, brandishing assorted tools and showing off a sculpture he says he'll soon finish – a quarter-century after starting. It incorporates three salvaged sewing machines whose individual brand names spell out Famous, White, Singer. He laughs like he's just told an embarrassing childhood story.

The studios, meanwhile, look like shrines to the success of The White Stripes, with almost everything – speaker cases and speaker cables, spools of two-inch tape and shelves of amplifiers – emblazoned in red, white and black. Johnny Cash's actual mirror ball hangs opposite a spinning speaker, 'The Spinaphone', suspended from the ceiling.

Bluegrass musician Chris Thile, who's recorded here, compares it and White's overall world to Tolkien or an epic video game. "Every decision is made to invite someone to lose themselves in that piece of art," he says, "to walk through the looking glass into an alternate reality."

White points to a Jonathan Exley

All White on the night: (clockwise from right) Jack with Loretta Lynn at the 2005 Grammy Awards; Macca, Jack's fave Fab; White joins The Rolling Stones, New York, October 29, 2006; White, Daft Punk and Beyoncé launch Tidal, 2015.

Tom Oldham, Getty (2), Alamy (2), Landmark

"I WOULD NEVER CALL MYSELF A SINGER STANDING NEXT TO BEYONCÉ"

Five Jack White inspirations. As told to GRAYSON HAVER CURRIN.

On his favourite Beatle: "Absolutely 1,000 per cent Paul McCartney. Get Back proves what I've been saying since I was 13 – without Paul, there's no Beatles. Everybody else is out-of-this-world incredible. But you could theoretically take any other Beatle out of that band and still have The Beatles. You want to be on George's side, for coolness. But it's easy to be the guy in the room who doesn't want to do anything. It's really hard to be the one in the room who's trying to motivate everybody. They don't come off as cool. It's a shame, because those are the people who make things happen. I'm not a fan of people who don't want to do things. That's demotivating."

On The Rolling Stones: "People want The Rolling Stones to be cool, dirty, raucous. They don't want to understand that The Rolling Stones were chasing a hit constantly and feeding off whatever the hippest thing was, copying whatever The Beatles did last week. That disrupts the fantasy. And the fantasy's *amazing* – I have indulged many times with those kinds of bands. That's not an insult. That's them being smart and figuring out a way to keep a train moving."

On meeting Prince: "When you get to meet somebody like that, it's never long enough. I come from an apprentice background, so my initial thought is, 'I would stop what I'm doing now and follow you around and carry your guitar case for a week.' He went into this Biblical thing about nobility. He told me, 'Nobody can tell you how to play your guitar, Jack.' I know that, but when you're being told that by Prince, it's different. You go, 'Oh wait, maybe I *don't* know that.'"

On working with Beyoncé: "I would love to produce an entire record with Beyoncé. She's like a modern Bessie Smith in her delivery and attitude. With a Beyoncé track, when you're playing back stuff, it makes you think, 'How dare you call yourself a singer?' once you hear somebody do this. It should make everybody want to quit. I first experienced that with Loretta Lynn. I'm lucky enough that I consider myself a vocalist, not a singer. I would never call myself a singer standing next to someone like Beyoncé."

On hip-hop: "On my block, if you're playing four square, we're listening to LL Cool J, the Real Roxanne, and EPMD. I didn't buy many of those records. I was really into playing real drums, playing rock'n'roll. But after a while, you start realising those things are inside of you whether you like it or not. It's the same thing with Latin music from the neighbourhood, too. Those rhythms and melodies are in your DNA. You can't help it."

> "PRINCE TOLD ME, 'NOBODY CAN TELL YOU HOW TO PLAY YOUR GUITAR, JACK.'"

“WHEN THE CHIPS ARE DOWN, SOMETHING INSIDE OF ME GOES WITH THIS GUT FEELING ABOUT HOW TO ATTACK.”

The house that Jack built: the hands-on Third Man CEO awaits a delivery of fresh product; (insets, left) White’s new album double-whammy *Fear Of The Dawn* (top) and *Entering Heaven Alive*; posthumous Third Man artist Prince.

photograph of Michael Jackson, shot for Vibe magazine in 1995, that looms over the mixing console. Standing in a field, arms folded, eyes obscured, shrouded in head-to-toe Tommy Hilfiger, Jackson looks like a mystic or, as White puts it, “just an alien”.

“He had this statement about having to let God into the room, because we’re not in control,” says White, wistfully. “You think you’re writing. You think you’re directing. But you’re just an antenna hoping to get a signal. You have to create your own ego death.”

BACK IN HIS OFFICE, SITTING BENEATH A huge portrait of Charley Patton, White frowns about one thing over which he seems to have little control – public perception in the face of fame.

“Nothing’s free,” he sighs. “Nice things happen. All these freedoms happen.” ➢

◄ He glances around the room, where rows of Third Man products – a Bob Dylan box set; an ornate guitar pedal called the Triplegraph – rest beneath a Third Man-emblazoned record player framed by two McIntosh 275 tube amplifiers (price: around $6,000 each). There's a stuffed giraffe, named G-Ride, against one wall, a peacock perched on another. Lately, he's been buying the original artwork from pulp fiction favourites, leaving them on the floor like an unfinished art project. These are the spoils of success.

"But then, on the other side of the scale," he continues, "there's things that take away freedoms."

White is, in part, referencing the backlash that has forever shadowed his rise. Some Detroit rockers lampooned the city's young star until he fled to Nashville in December 2005. His public feuds – a fistfight with The Von Bondies' Jason Stollsteimer, repeated bro-offs with The Black Keys – are so fabled that New York magazine once maintained a running list. "White makes a mess whenever he tries to talk about someone," the piece began.

Of all the faults people find, however, White takes the most umbrage at the notion he's an asshole who hates you because you have a cell phone (he's never had one) or disrespects his bandmates, an implication arising from the 2012 tour where White rotated an all-male and all-female backing band, only deciding which one would play on the morning of the show. That idea likely seemed less fun if you were one of that night's cast-offs.

"People say, 'Oh, Jack will only record by candlelight,'" he says, his face somehow suggesting both scowl and smile. "Go ahead and think that. I don't give a fuck if you think that. But if you think, 'No, Jack treats his band members like shit,' hold on a second, man. If anything's said in a negative light, I want it to be *true*."

For years, he accepted scorn as the cost of the mission. The last therapist he saw, more than a decade ago now, warned him that having a perspective or expressing an opinion was a surefire way to court disdain.

"People say that I can't do anything without pretence," he says. "No arguing with you there, but I would say everything we experience is pretentious. Some would say the Ramones are the most incredible authentic punk band there was. Some others could say they wore uniforms. They had clever stage names that weren't their real names. I love the Ramones to death. Just saying guys, Let's not pretend that's not a pretence. But when you see people *pick* on something for being pretentious, they don't like it to begin with."

Camille
RAMONES

Jack through the looking glass: White at Third Man Records, with "the spoils of success"; (insets, from top) former Third Man Studios tenant Chris Thile; Prince's ultra-rare scrapped album *Camille*, purchased by White for $49,375, and to be released in due course by Third Man; White and his all-woman band The Peacocks at the Eurockéennes Festival, Belfort, July 1, 2012.

Tom Oldham, Eyevine, Getty

BEN BLACKWELL'S OFFICE AT Third Man is a chaotic reliquary of radical politics and radical rock'n'roll.

A Detroit diehard and White's nephew, seven years his junior, Blackwell long ago devoted an entire lacquered beadboard wall to The Stooges – signed setlists, framed posters, an oil painting of Ron Asheton. Elsewhere, a 1968 photo of the young band in a Michigan cornfield has been enlarged to become wallpaper. Flags, pins, and letterhead from Michigan's White Panther Party lurk in every nook. When Blackwell says a box contains $10,000 of 45s, you move your coffee cup before realising it was a joke.

Blackwell is one of two minority co-owners of Third Man, having been here since the start after selling merch and taping sets for

INCREDIBLE!
The Beatles
Yesterday
And Today
BIG 2 HOUR STAGE SHOW!
CANTON MEMORIAL AUDITORIU
NEW YEAR'S DAY THUR.
3 P. M. and 8.15 P. M.
JAN
IN PERSON
HANK

"I'D LOVE TO SIT HERE AND ARROGANTLY SAY I COULD CARE LESS WHAT OTHER PEOPLE THINK. THAT'S NOT THE CASE."

The White Stripes as a teenager. The *de facto* in-house archivist, Blackwell jubilantly expounds on his quest to release *every* Jack White-adjacent show. When White forgets a song title or date, he invariably concludes, "Oh, Blackwell knows."

On a Thursday morning, White teeters at the threshold of Blackwell's office, as if afraid of being absorbed by its ephemera. Bouncing on the balls of his feet, he spins around and grins. "We won the auction!" he announces. "Ben, how about the other good news?"

The night before, on White's behalf, Blackwell placed a $49,375 bid on one of possibly 25 known copies of Prince's *Camille*, a 1986 album on which Prince indulged androgyny by pitch-shifting his voice into a higher register. He scrapped it just before release. The pair already lost one auction for a copy in 2017 (Questlove nabbed that one), but snagging it now was a business move. "We're finally going to put it out," says Blackwell. "Prince's people agreed – almost too easy."

Striding the few feet back to his own office, White justifies the hefty outlay: "We had to show we had some skin in the game."

Releasing *Camille* is an obvious extension of work Third Man has already done. In 2020, they partnered with the Prince Estate to issue a 7-inch box set for *Sign O' The Times*, the classic *Camille* helped spawn. Whether pressing the complete chronological output of the Mississippi Sheiks or returning out-of-print works by The Supremes or the Melvins to shelves, preservation is paramount to the label's mission.

With a shrug, White says, "Handing things off to the next generation is probably a good idea, right?"

THERE'S A MORE INSTRUCTIVE ELEMENT FOR WHITE in a project like *Camille*, though – it's a warning against the idolatry that stars demand.

Prince scrapped *Camille* a year before he infamously pulled the much-bootlegged *Black Album* from stores just as it was about to be released. Now, 13 years into running a business that pursues audacious projects as a matter of course, White expresses sympathy not for the artist, but for the employees. How many people, he wonders aloud, spent time enabling those albums only to watch Prince veto them?

He recounts another anecdote where Prince fired an audio technician for not having fixed the button he happened just that second to press. "I always want to ask people if they think it's really cool ➢

The Blue Prince of Music City: White and the Nashville skyline; (left, from top) Duane Denison, Insane Clown Posse, Q-Tip.

< Prince did that, or is that a really humongous asshole thing?” says White. “It’s a straight ego move – ‘*This* is how much of a badass I am.’”

It’s not just Prince, of course. White talks about Keith Moon’s habit of trashing hotel rooms and the workers who cleaned up his messes, and the assorted exploits of The Rolling Stones. There was even a time, he recounts, when White himself felt cavalierly treated by Jagger and Richards, a period the pair were using his studio on and off.

“They were testing me to see if I could produce the Stones,” White says, laughing nervously as he stares at a Polaroid of Richards from that session, still affixed to the mixing console. “That went on six years, and I didn’t know what else to do.”

This, White agrees, is how *he’s* sometimes been perceived – a selfish star making everyone play his game by his rules. As a kid, he thought about being a priest, but only if he could have taken it as far as he wanted. “I wouldn’t have been OK if I had not taken a vow of silence, become a monastic,” he says. “There are so many things I can’t be a part of unless I go all the way.”

As an adult, he is beginning to recognise that such extremism can look like trolling, a word he often uses to describe the image he hopes to shed. In some cases, like his decision to produce an Insane Clown Posse album, it *was* trolling: “My whole thought is, Hey, watch how pissed people are going to be.”

But he knows and regrets that’s how people interpret more sincere efforts, too, including his 2018 demand that ticket holders check their cell phones before entering his shows (“We’re all in this room. We’re communing”). He understands it’s how people interpret his obsession with vinyl and analogue technology, too. Not that he’s in any way penitent about that. “When you have a chance to fight to keep something alive,” he says, “it’s good to be part of that.”

He even thinks that suspicions he was trolling fuelled responses to *Boarding House Reach*, a record he insists he knew would be divisive but swears will age well.

“The music was so out of my comfort zone that I get so much inspiration from listening to those songs,” he says, his raspy voice hitting a defensive high note. “The stuff is so dangerous.”

Even so, he doubts he’ll make a record like that again, music he feels he has to defend. “That period with Trump,” he says, “the whole world mad at everything, was not a good time to put out anything provocative, especially ‘Jack White’.”

White thinks a lot about how to *get* more energy – there’s the fasting, and a new trick: staring straight into the sun as soon as he wakes up, which he calls “a bizarre evolutionary thing” for conquering grogginess. And as he nears 50, he is thinking more about how to *spend* less of it unnecessarily. White knows that caring about others’ opinions and admitting fault may make him less edgy – people expect rock’n’roll to have its egotistical bad boys, its cranks. But those around him are helping him temper the tantrums, mitigate the obsessions. He says the pop culture he often consumes with his children – Scarlett, 15, and Henry, 14 – is teaching him to appreciate art on the surface. Then there are the 100 employees of Third Man, all dependent on him, all earning a living wage. There’s more at stake than ego.

“Overwhelmingly, I involve myself in how things affect people around me now,” says White. “I don’t think Third Man could exist if I didn’t. I’d love to sit here and arrogantly say I could care less what other people think. That’s not the case.”

Tom Oldham, Getty, Avalon

“WE WORK THE SAME WAY – VIBING AND JAMMING”

How Q-Tip and Jack White became collaborators. By GRAYSON HAVER CURRIN.

FOR A SPELL, Jack White felt like he’d slid a riddle into a song. During Into The Twilight, the demented rave-up at the centre of *Fear Of The Dawn*, two samples from acrobatic vocal jazz institution Manhattan Transfer crisscross as the song’s final minute begins. But none of White’s music-zealot friends spotted the snippets – that is, until he sent the song to A Tribe Called Quest mastermind Q-Tip. “‘Is that a Manhattan Transfer you’ve got on there?’” White remembers Tip asking. “He knew *instantly*.”

Q-Tip first heard The White Stripes around the start of the century, when *De Stijl* caught his ear. He introduced himself to White backstage in New York, ignoring any talk of how much his raps had meant to White to discuss other sounds instead.

“We were both music-enthused, into gear and mikes and studio stuff,” Q-Tip tells MOJO. “We look for the information people wouldn’t know about – who played this on this record or what kind of board Led Zeppelin used to record *Houses Of The Holy*. We hit it off there.”

The two stayed in touch for years, and toyed with working together, but those tentative talks solidified only after Phife Dawg died during the recording of the first Tribe album in nearly 20 years. White flew to the funeral and stuck around to contribute to two tracks on *We Got It From Here… Thank You 4 Your Service*, including one with both Elton John and Busta Rhymes.

“We work the same way – vibing and jamming, both geeks trying to get the right sounds,” Q-Tip says. “He’s a real mensch in the studio, chasing a dragon of inspiration and creativity. He loses the sense that he’s ‘Jack White’ and becomes just a dude married to the energy, the concept, the song.”

The pair have worked on several tracks since *Thank You…*, but they never managed to finish one – until now. When White convinced Q-Tip to add a verse to Hi-De-Ho, he promised they’d eventually get back to those earlier pieces. The rapper likes that prospect.

“We have a lot of ideas that maybe we can put together into a long-play one day. I’d be game,” he says, laughing. “That’s my boy, my friend. We’ve got a great brotherhood we’ll probably have until we go.”

“JACK’S A REAL MENSCH IN THE STUDIO, CHASING A DRAGON OF INSPIRATION AND CREATIVITY.” Q-TIP

"PEOPLE SAY, 'OH, JACK WILL ONLY RECORD BY CANDLELIGHT.' GO AHEAD AND THINK THAT. I DON'T GIVE A FUCK."

Stop press: White is even considering getting a cell phone, since he's tired of being a burden to friends doing him digital favours and he needs one to organise a Covid test. He marvels at his 91-year-old mother, Teresa, who walks around her home listening to Catholic Mass on Bluetooth headphones. Resisting modernity, once a selling point for White and Third Man alike, has just become a nuisance.

"I made those brave points in the past. I used to feed off that," he says. "You get soaked in negative energy, and you have to be able to keep walking through that rain. It's not really something I'm going to be interested in doing for the rest of my life."

SOON AFTER WHITE RETURNED TO NASHVILLE FROM Kalamazoo in late 2020, he started asking friends to stop by.

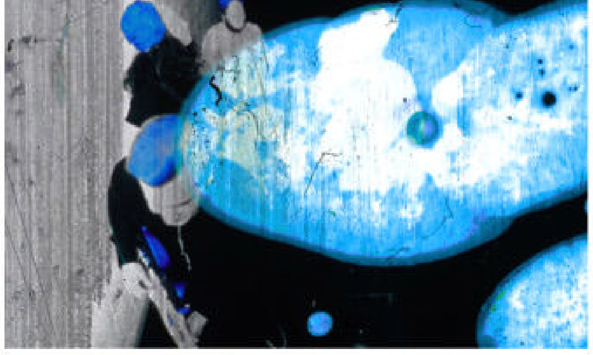
One of the first was Ben Swank, not only the other Ben at Third Man but also its other minority co-owner. White first met Swank when he was the drummer for Ohio's hard-charging Soledad Brothers, but Swank laughs off any suggestion he is "much of an accomplished musician". When Swank visited, White said he needed basic rhythms for first takes of new songs. They cut three numbers in a day. One of them, a ramshackle torch song called A Tip From Me To You, opens *Entering Heaven Alive*, the gentler of White's two albums. That's Swank on drums.

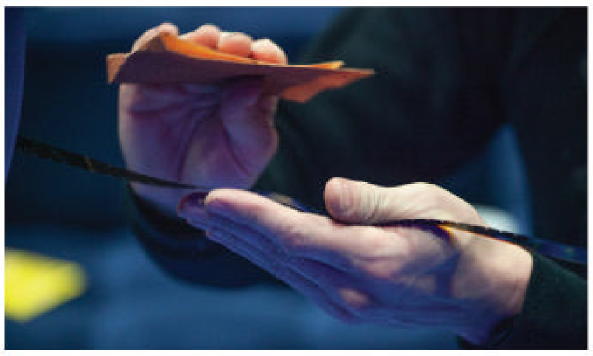
"I thought he just needed someone to get ideas on tape," Swank tells MOJO today. "He liked it enough to keep working."

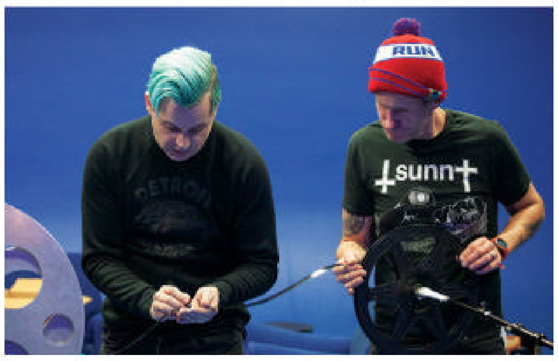
Almost a year later, in September 2021, Duane Denison, the former guitarist of post-hardcore safety hazards The Jesus Lizard, got a similar call. White's daughter Scarlett had befriended Denison's daughter Francesca. When White dropped by to pick Scarlett up one afternoon, he realised it was *that* Duane Denison. Discussing fatherhood, hometowns, and baseball, they became friends.

When White called Denison to ask him to play on a demo, Denison took a vacation day from Nashville Public Library. Once again, it wasn't a demo. Denison's snarling solo during Morning, Noon, And Night – the classic rock triumph near the end of *Fear Of The Dawn* – marks the first time anyone except White has taken a guitar solo on any of his albums.

"I didn't just show up and overdub stuff," says Denison, a Nashville session veteran. "It was live, with the amps cranked up and ➢







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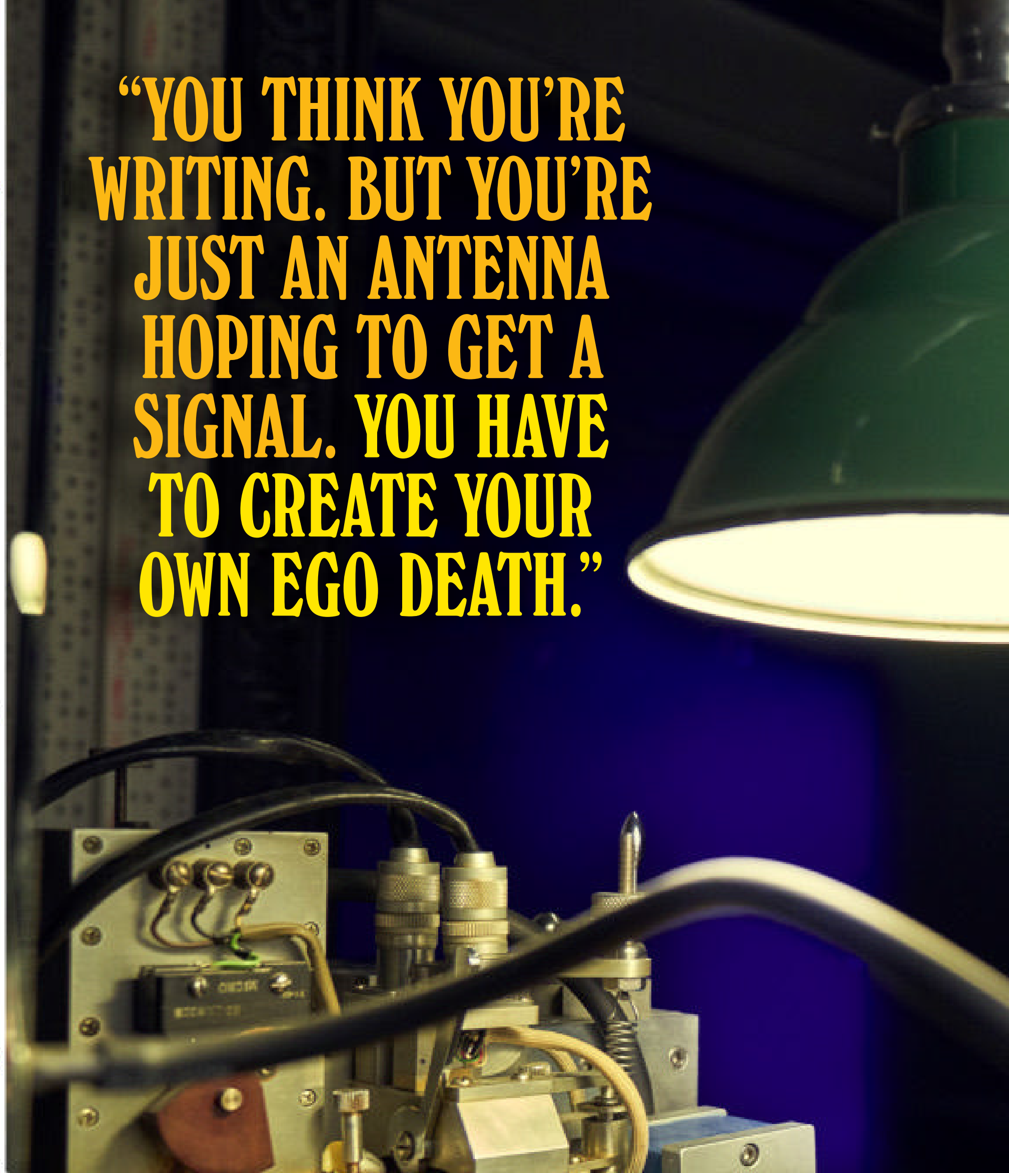


> “YOU THINK YOU’RE WRITING. BUT YOU’RE JUST AN ANTENNA HOPING TO GET A SIGNAL. YOU HAVE TO CREATE YOUR OWN EGO DEATH.”

⋖ the drums and vocal mike right there. It went against modern recording. It was reaffirming.”

Such impulsiveness helped steer White’s months of home sessions. He often refused, for instance, to send players actual demos in advance, a way to harness their improvisational energy. They could hear the idea when they arrived. “You’re not an orchestra leader with hired guns,” White says. “You form a little band. You make it work.”

White cultivated another form of energy by finding an idea he liked and pursuing it on his own for hours, scorning to pause and recruit help for fear of squandering his momentum. The first three tracks on *Fear Of The Dawn* – massive, mauling rock songs all – happened that way. Several tunes on *Entering Heaven Alive* worked like that, too, with White adding his own drums at the end. “There were the dumb trials and errors of recording all the instruments,” he says. “But I knew the sound I wanted.”

Those competing strategies – inclusion versus isolation – allowed White to stick with songs about which he was uncertain for longer than ever before, to approach ideas from alternate angles. In the past, he would often discard a tune as soon as it stalled; that’s why there are so few unreleased White Stripes relics. “I would just abandon them,” he says without a whiff of regret.

What began, for instance, as a potential 20-second interlude built on a sample of swing star Cab Calloway’s anthem Hi-De-Ho Man steadily expanded. Olivia Jean added a Boris-sized wash of feedback, White a bouncy bassline. He dispatched the track to A Tribe Called Quest’s Q-Tip, who replied with a pun-rich rap about Jive Records and Chuck Berry.

White says he’s rarely laboured over any song as much as Into The Twilight, a peppy bit of electro-shocked rock. A Manhattan Transfer sample, William S. Burroughs cut-ups, cascading keyboards, daughter Scarlett on bass, a rare guitar pedal that translated his signal into the chirpy voice of Japanese “virtual pop star” Hatsune Miku: White crammed it all into five electrifying minutes. “So many moments came out of that,” he says, bordering on breathlessness, “things I’d never done.”

Most of a year passed before White recognised he had nearly 30 songs, most of which split neatly into distinct stylistic categories. He loves albums with extreme swings – *The White Album* is naturally his favourite Beatles record. But this felt like too much to fit. Some members of his management team encouraged him to pare down, consolidate. Others urged a year at least between releases.

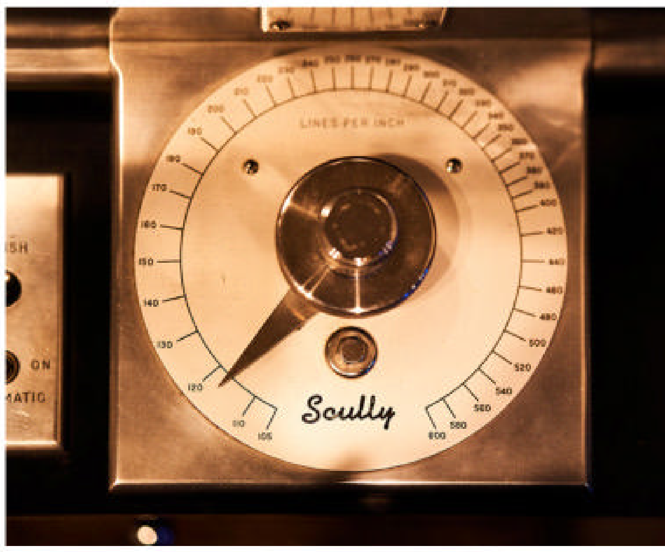
He chose the most difficult and exciting route – to issue them separately but as close together as production schedules allowed.

“None of it felt safe,” he says, pulling together the risks of Third Man, live television, and two disparate new albums into The Unified Theory Of Jack White. “That’s a great space. If you fear it too much, it can eat you alive.”

HIS HANDS FULL OF COFFEE GROUNDS, WHITE grabs a strand of 16-millimetre film suspended between two microphone stands. He grinds the strip until he sees

Tom Oldham (7), Alamy, Andrew Najarian (3)

Do touch that dial: Jack White hand-cuts another slab of vinyl, Third Man Records, Nashville, January 21, 2022; (insets, left) hands on: White shows MOJO writer Grayson Haver Currin how to distress film for the Fear Of The Dawn video; White the baseball aficionado enjoys another hit; 2022's Love Is Selfish 45.



JOHN A. WHITE III, D.D.S.
FAMILY DENTISTRY
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scratches. Another Third Man employee, Andrew Najarian, paws at the film with soil stolen from a potted plant. White glances to his left and grins: "Oh, yeah. That's going to look great."

When Third Man began making plans to release two records by its founder within a three-month window, they looked for help. But proposed budgets from music-video directors, White thought, seemed inflated, reminding him of the only conversation he had with David Bowie, in 2007, as the end of The White Stripes neared.

"I said, 'You used to make such interesting videos. I haven't seen you doing that. Is there some reason?'" White remembers asking. "He said, 'Oh, it's not worth the money, because they're not going to play it.' Good point."

So White decided to redirect the funds by directing the videos himself. Third Man, after all, already has an in-house videographer, ex-Whirlwind Heat drummer Brad Holland. White and Holland filmed the eerie video for Love Is Selfish – the shuffling country lament that in January became *Entering Heaven Alive*'s first single – at a rented American Legion clubhouse in one day.

White recorded *Fear Of The Dawn*'s title track alone, playing drums, guitars, Theremin and other instruments himself. But he wanted the video to look like a full band. He got Blackwell, Swank, and guitar tech Dan Mancini to sport blue wigs and white masks, pantomiming their boss behind him.

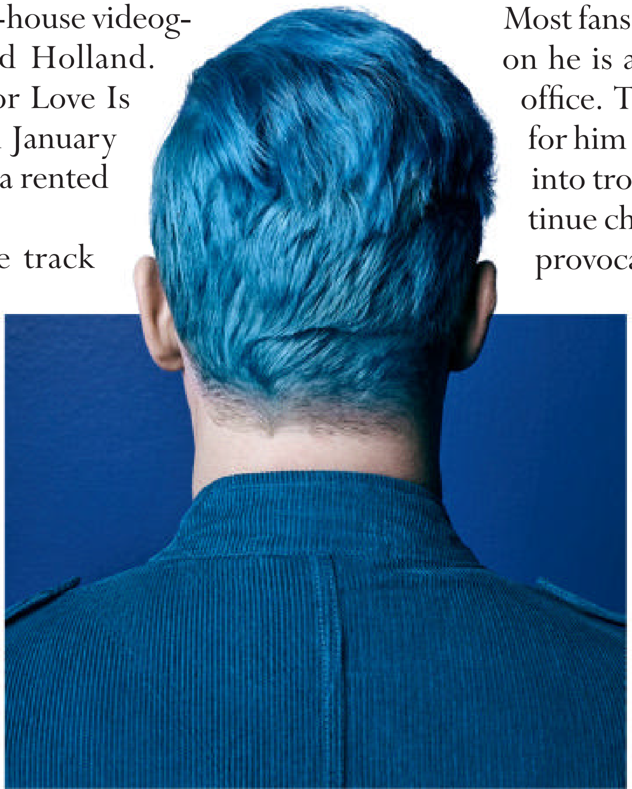
Holland filmed it in one take on one camera in a Third Man hallway on a weekday. He shipped the file to the only film-processing company he could find willing to play along with White's wild idea: put it on film, damage the film until it was almost ruined, and turn the results into the video.

Aside from the coffee, White smears shaving cream into the film and washes away the residue with water. He douses it with bleach and marvels as the emulsion – essentially, the chemicals that make film work – turn a lurid green. He jabs the blade of an X-Acto knife between his hand and the spool, flecking off colour and occasionally slashing gashes that Holland seals with Scotch tape.

"If you walk around here, there's nothing more independent," White says, referencing Third Man's ability to record, manufacture, promote, and sell. "It's easy to have a vanity label. But that's not really giving. It's taking."

Most fans, White thinks, would be surprised how hands-on he is at Third Man, how often he's working in his office. This is a different sort of extremism, a chance for him to funnel the words that have often gotten him into trouble back into action. A way, he hopes, to continue channelling energy into creativity and not empty provocation. No matter the response, he insists he is prouder of this phase of his career than anything else.

"I've made better things by balancing the stable parts of life with the unstable, or the ways I did things when I was younger," he says, his cadence collected and thoughtful. "Can you be an artist in an unstable place? That's common. But can you be an artist in a stable place?"



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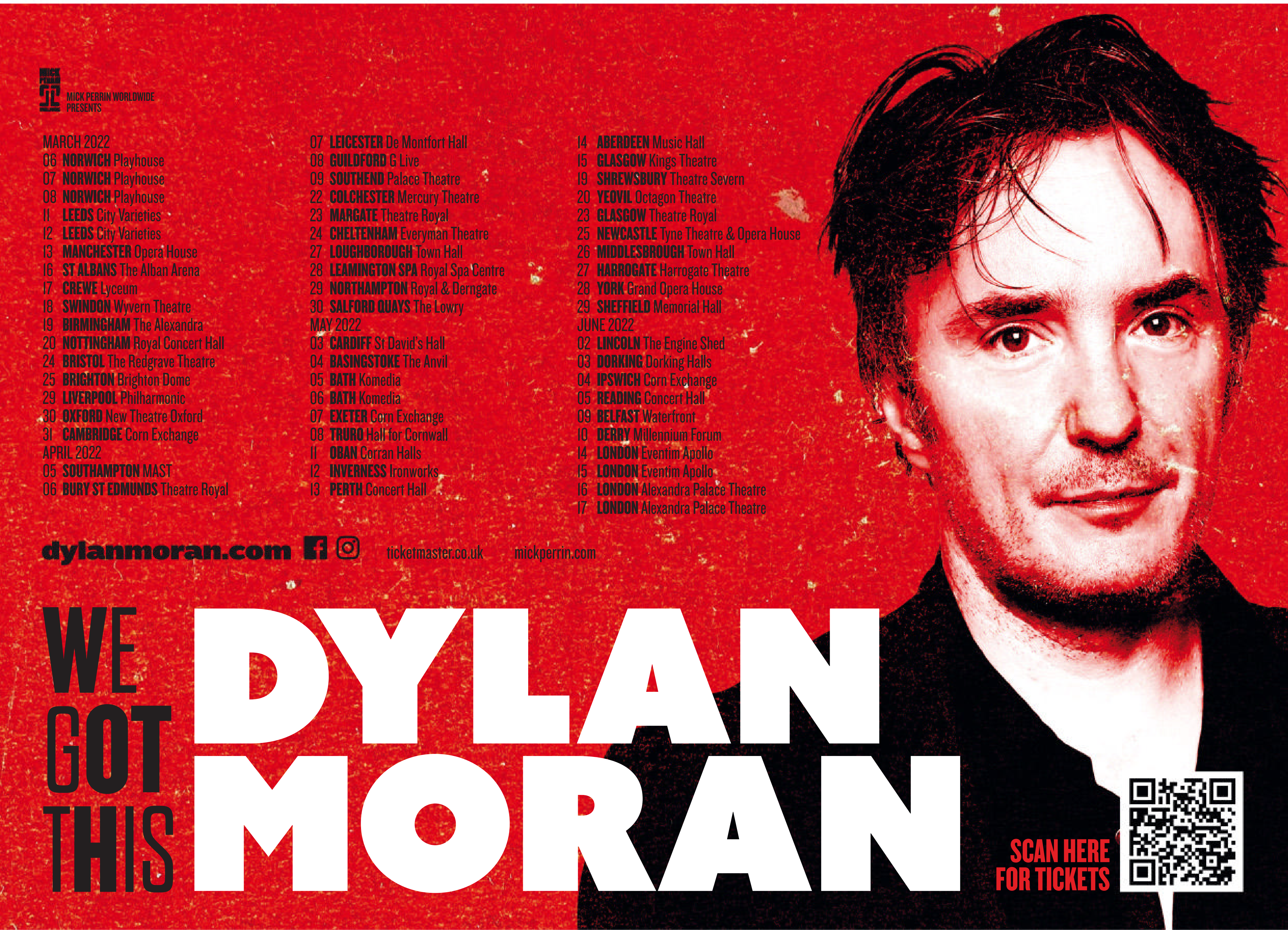

MICK PERRIN WORLDWIDE
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> "His default rhythm remains the stoned circuitous amble."
>
> **KEITH CAMERON KEEPS UP WITH KURT VILE, ALBUMS PAGE 87**

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Dreadlocks in moonlight

Reggae veteran and Massive Attack collaborator meets UK dub don in Ramsgate for a modern roots masterclass. By **Simon McEwen**. Illustration by **Maria Papaefstathiou**.

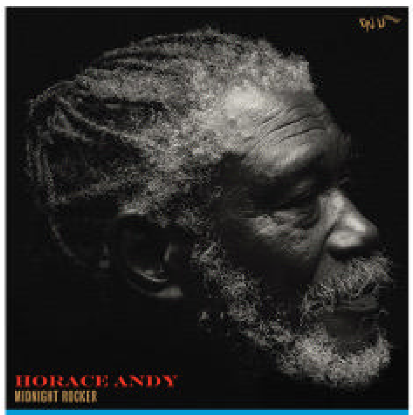
Horace Andy

★★★★

Midnight Rocker

ON-U SOUND. CD/DL/LP

PICTURE THE scene: 13 Brentford Road, Kingston, Jamaica, the home of producer Clement 'Coxsone' Dodd's fabled recording and publishing facility Studio One. It's 1970, and a nervous teenage singer by the name of Horace Hinds steps up to the mike to run through a reggae tune he's written called Got To Be Sure. The stakes are high: Hinds has already unsuccessfully auditioned here a few days earlier as a duo with Frank Melody, and his first single, This Is A Black Man's Country, cut with producer Phil Pratt four years earlier, was a flop. It's now or never for the young Rastafarian vocalist, but something isn't right. The musicians around him fidget and giggle, bemused and surprised by the singer's distinctive, quavering falsetto – the way it sounds both male *and* female. These seasoned session men have never heard anything like it. Fortunately for Hinds, neither has Coxsone, who spots something unique in the singer's heartfelt emoting and signs him up on the spot.



"Andy's fragile, yearning falsetto floats above the mix."

That voice, with its singular vibrato warble, coupled with a stick-to-your-guns attitude, has well served Horace 'Sleepy' Andy (renamed by Dodd as a tribute to former Paragons vocalist Bob Andy and to distance him from his cousin Justin Hinds; nicknamed Sleepy, see Q&A) over a career spanning five decades. It's what compelled esteemed producer and On-U Sound label boss Adrian Sherwood to team up with the singer for *Midnight Rocker*, a record which skilfully distils the essence of one of the most respected and influential Jamaican artists of reggae's golden era (1968-85). It also, of course, helped bring Andy international acclaim due to his on-going association with pioneering Bristol soundsystem collective Massive Attack. Andy has contributed to all five Massive LPs, from 1990's *Blue Lines* up to 2010's *Heligoland*, making him the band's most faithful vocal stalwart. A fact not lost on Robert Del Naja in a recent interview: "Horace connects us to the Afro-Caribbean scene which is part of Bristol's history. He has such an amazing history, in America, the UK and Jamaica, it's just a privilege to work with him."

The 70-year-old singer began making history in 1972, when he and Dodd hit big with Skylarking, a song about idle ne'er-do-wells hanging around Kingston street corners. A string of self-penned conscious roots singles (Illiteracy, Help The Children, Every Tongue Shall Tell) followed alongside yearning lovers laments such as Fever and a stunningly soulful cover of Al Wilson's Show & Tell. By the mid-'70s, it was evident Andy had the interpretive powers and lilting vocal technique to suit any setting, from cultural roots material through to lovers rock and the burgeoning dancehall scene. He cut a series of superb 45s with producers such as Bunny Lee, Winston 'Niney' Holness, Keith Hudson and Leonard 'Santic' Chin, before relocating to Hartford, Connecticut in the late-'70s. It was in the States he made 1977's dread-heavy roots set *In The Light/In The Dub* with producer Everton DaSilva and '82's *Dance Hall Style* – a genuine masterpiece of the genre – for Lloyd Barnes' Bullwackies imprint based in the Bronx (Andy would revisit stand-out track Spying Glass on Massive Attack's 1994 *Protection* LP). After a move to London's Ladbroke Grove in the mid-'80s, the singer would continue to collaborate with venerated UK dub producers such as Mad Professor and soundsystem operator Jah Shaka, while also regularly returning to Jamaica to record.

It's surprising then, after such a peripatetic existence, it took until as recently as 2018 for Andy to hook up with On-U's Adrian Sherwood. For Sherwood, currently operating out of his home studio in Ramsgate, Kent, is associated with many other notable Jamaican artists including Lee 'Scratch' Perry, Bim Sherman, Prince Far I, Little Roy and Junior Delgado. What's equally surprising is that *Midnight Rocker* should sound as it does: an immaculate set of catchy, conscious modern roots largely shorn of Sherwood's trademark fusion of trippy dub techniques and post-punk noise, as typified by On-U regulars New Age Steppers, Creation Rebel, Dub Syndicate and African Head Charge; a sonic template once described by the late NME journalist Dele Fadele as, "Drug music which you don't need to take drugs to enjoy."

On *Midnight Rocker*, Sherwood's often extreme psychedelic tendencies (channelling the supernatural soundworlds of dub pioneers King Tubby and Lee 'Scratch' Perry) are tempered in favour of a more sympathetic, nuanced treatment, with reverb, echo and FX employed for textural sonic detail rather than pure amplification. From the brooding majesty of opener This Must Be Hell onwards, Sherwood allows Andy's fragile, yearning falsetto to float above the mix, a similar, uncluttered modus operandi the producer adopted for Bim Sherman's landmark 1996 LP *Miracle*. It's a simpatico, cross-generational alliance not unlike Rick Rubin's work with Johnny Cash, or Richard Russell and Damon Albarn's team-up with Bobby Womack for 2012's *The Bravest Man In The Universe*.

There are moments of genuine wonder here too: the inspired cover of Massive Attack's Safe From Harm (originally sung by Shara Nelson), with its propulsive, rumbling bassline and Andy's foreboding delivery – "Midnight rockers, city slickers, gun men and maniacs…" – before the song heads skyward on an updraft of escalating synths (courtesy of Anglo-Italian musician Gaudi – see Back Story). Likewise, the emotional heft of Today Is Right Here, a reconstituted take on Dreams Come True from the Sherwood-produced Lee 'Scratch' Perry LP *Heavy Rain*, where Andy mulls over life's vicissitudes in soulful, featherlight tones: "You got to live for today/'Cos tomorrow might not come your way."

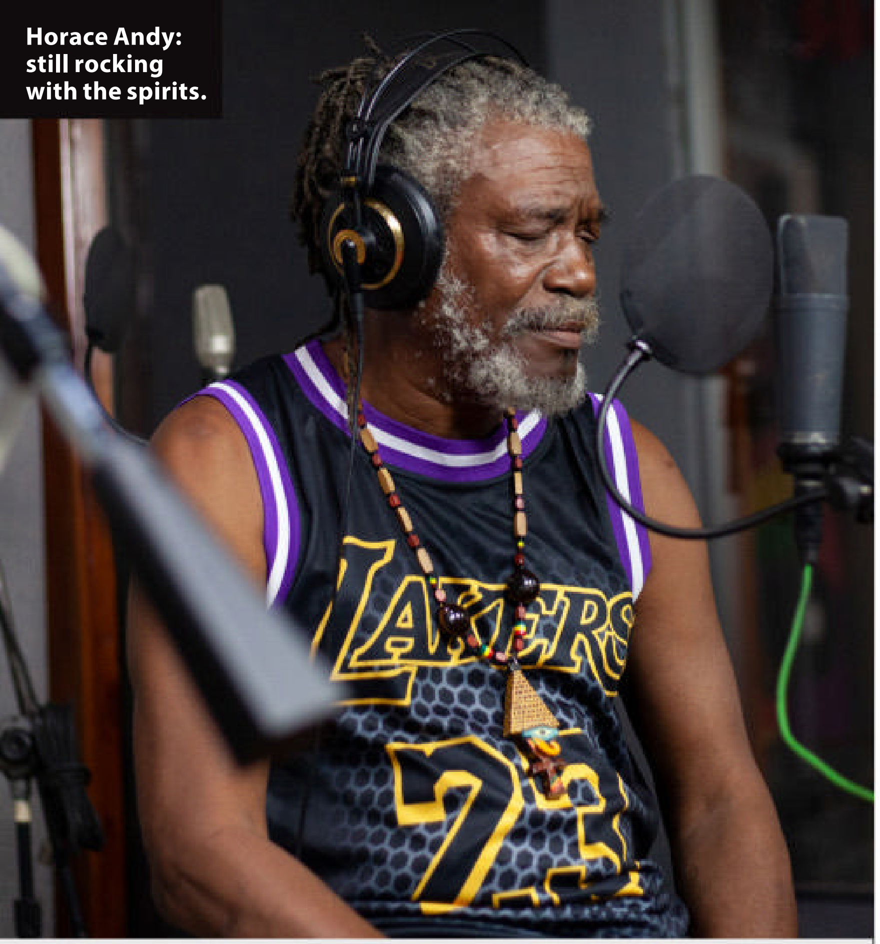
Fittingly, *Midnight Rocker* ends where Andy began, with a re-upholstered version of his evergreen Studio One hit Mr Bassie – a tribute to Heptones singer/bassist Leroy Sibbles, though now it's tempting to re-imagine it as a kiss off to one of the S1 musicians who may've laughed at the singer back in the day. Over its funky, syncopated one-drop rhythm and nursery-rhyme piano melody, Sleepy pleads for the song to keep playing from "dusk 'til dawn". Still rocking beyond midnight, then, and long may he continue to do so. This is not only Horace Andy's best album in 40 years, but it is also a work of lasting power.

Getty

BACK STORY: GAUDI – SONIC ARCHITECT

● London-based Anglo-Italian producer/musician Gaudi, who's worked with Lee 'Scratch' Perry, Steel Pulse and Hollie Cook, played 13 different instruments for *Midnight Rocker*, including piano, synths, Hammond and melodica. "It's very instinctive what I choose to play," he explains. "I even undusted my old Stylophone for the track Try Love, then filtered, effected and echoed the sound. It's wicked! But really, when you have such a top calibre singer like Horace, you could just leave it a cappella and it's already done. It's like cooking, if you've got great ingredients you don't need to add extra garlic or this and that. The most important thing was to do justice to Horace's beautiful, sweet voice."

HORACE SPEAKS! SLEEPY & SHERWOOD ON HUSTLERS AND "GOOD EARS".



Horace Andy: still rocking with the spirits.

"I've got through all the tribulations."

Horace Andy and Adrian Sherwood talk to Simon McEwen.

Why the nickname Sleepy?

Horace Andy: "All my life they call me Sleepy because, honestly, I'll be talking to you and after 10 minutes I'll fall asleep. (*Laughs*) It's true!"

Better keep this brief, then. You've worked with many great Jamaican producers, such as Coxsone, Bunny Lee and Lloyd Barnes. Was it any different working with Adrian?

HA: "It was really wonderful working with Adrian. He's a very smart man, y'know? He knows the music and has very good ears. Adrian chose some of my old Studio One songs, and we did some new ones too for *Midnight Rocker*. I'm very proud of it. Adrian is a *producer*, not like some [I've worked with] who are more like investors and hustlers and don't pay their artists properly."

How did your 1970 audition with Coxsone go?

HA: "It was OK. I went there with my first two songs, Got To Be Sure and Something On My Mind. But when I started singing the musicians began laughing because of the sound of my voice. They thought it sounded strange! (*Laughs*) They never mean anything, man. But I passed the audition. Mr Dodd was a real producer, y'know, he had a vision and made Studio One a company like Motown. I loved working there because I learnt how to play all the instruments. I played bass, guitar, piano, organ… the only one I didn't learn to play was the drum."

What's your favourite track on *Midnight Rocker*?

HA: "I love the song Today Is Right Here (*starts singing*), 'My mama told me/When I was a child…' Everyone will love it because it's about life's ups and downs and they can relate. There's only a couple of spiritual songs on *Midnight Rocker* but it is still, overall, very spiritual."

What have you learnt from over 50 years in the music business?

HA: "I've learnt to be humble and patient. I've got through all the tribulations you can think of: guns in my face, no money… there's a lot of things that have happened [to me] over the years, man. I got shot at a basement party in America in 1981, caught in the crossfire, so it's a blessing that I'm still here, y'know? So I am happy and I give thanks to the Father."

What made you decide on such a clean, uncluttered production?

Adrian Sherwood: "Horace has got this incredible, instantly recognisable voice so I wanted his vocal to be crystal clear. I treated it a bit like the *Miracle* LP I made with Bim Sherman in 1996 – to leave the voice almost raw but also have really good layers behind it. It was important to have the right combination of players, too, people like Gaudi, Celloman, Crucial Tony, Skip McDonald and George Oban. These were the last sessions George ever worked on because he'd been ill for some time and sadly passed away in January. He was a dear, dear friend who played bass on the debut New Age Steppers LP in 1981. So this is an extra special record for me and we're all very proud of it. You know, Horace is a living, vintage legend, whose voice is as good as it ever was, and I think that comes across."

Dolly Parton

★★★

Run, Rose, Run

BUTTERFLY. CD/DL/LP

Her 48th album, the soundtrack to a new novel.

Inspired by the story from her new novel of the same name, *Run, Rose, Run* mirrors the book's plot: poor country girl heads to Nashville with a book full of songs and her family's stinging predictions of failure ringing in her ears. Maybe it's the bind of the over-arching concept, but Parton's signature grit and steel is lost amongst painfully cheesy puns – Woman Up (And Take It Like A Man) is particularly laboured – plastic country backing and overly buffed production. Deep down, however, Blue Bonnet Breeze and Secrets are among the sweetest ballads she's ever sung, showcasing that crystal voice which still sparkles in her mid-seventies. While some of her peers are making late-life albums that push both them and their audience, it's a pity Parton has retreated into much safer and predictable territory.

Andy Fyfe

Laibach

★★★★

Wir Sind Das Volk (Ein Musical Aus Deutschland)

MUTE. CD/LP

Slovenian inquisitors/ musical-theatre impresarios probe Germania.

As they admitted on 1983 track Perspektive, Laibach's conceptual fuel included, and still includes, "industrial production, art of the Third Reich, totalitarianism… disco." Using "motifs and texts" from East German postmodern dramatist Heiner Müller, who synthesised borrowed voices and his own into a basilisk interrogation of his homeland, its people and their troubled recent past, this 2020 'Musical From Germany' is, then, a perfect vehicle for the themes which possess the group. The sound of a theatre production rather than a song-based musical entertainment – lengthy spoken-word soliloquys (in German), sonic paintings of air raids and oracular avant-classical minimalism sit alongside more familiar Laibach *Sturm und Drang* – the group's disorientating way with reframing materials makes for an unnerving experience, full with violence, trauma and insight. It goes without saying it may get less spins than such previous fans favourites as *WAT* or *Volk*. What would a British variant sound like?

Ian Harrison

Melody's Echo Chamber

★★★

Emotional Eternal

DOMINO. CD/DL/LP

Third album from psychedelic French artist soars angelic.

With her 2012 debut, Parisian songwriter Melody Prochet joined forces with her producer Kevin Parker on a hazy quest to jam the clock hands around 1970. *Emotional Eternal*, made in Stockholm with Swedish indie-rock stalwarts Reine Fiske and Fredrik Swahn, continues her mission, a high-gloss finish enveloping her intricate songs. Prochet's crocheted-gossamer voice enchants those who like their cosmic wanderings on the ethereal side, but *Emotional Eternal*'s real allure lies in its baroque keyboards, brocaded strings and, on Pyramids In The Clouds, flashes of Turkish psychedelia. It's Saint Etienne and The Cardigans as much as the original source material, A Slow Dawning Of Peace and Alma The Voyage pitched between record fair and renaissance fayre. The best moments – Where The Water Clears The Illusion's untethered vocals, for example – come with an edge of unease, pushing Prochet onwards, upwards, and out of her beautifully suspended animation.

Victoria Segal

Subway Sect

★★★★

Moments Like These

GNU INC. DL/LP

A Subway-Clash of Vic Godard and Mick Jones?

Back in late 2019, when MOJO went to a playback of this album, Vic Godard and producer Mick Jones said they'd actually finished it just 20 minutes earlier. Delayed by Covid, it still sounds freshly baked. The particular bond between band and producer (fellow '76 punk campaigners, both acts were managed by volatile brain-reprogrammer Bernard Rhodes) make for sweet harmony, accommodating all of Vic's oddities and punk-romantic angles in warm-sounding soul, Latin, funk and Radio 2-ready pop tunes. Time, fate and what success means inform the songs – the jaunty How High The Walls? finds Vic pondering dropping dead on-stage in his wavering, nasal croon – but for all the hard-won wisdom, cautionary tales and self-awareness, it's heroically unjaded. Jones's contributions, meanwhile, make it a candidate to join Ellen Foley's *Spirit Of St Louis* or B.A.D's *No.10 Upping Street* as a Clash-adjacent LP fans need to hear.

Ian Harrison

Swami John Reis

★★★★

Ride The Wild Night

SWAMI. LP

San Diego garage-punker goes solo (assisted by rockin' new band).

Ever full-blooded in his pursuit of unreconstructed ramalama under copious aliases (Rocket From The Crypt, Hot Snakes, Night Marchers etc), beloved 'Speedo' can be relied upon to swerve lame introspective singer-songwriting. On this first properly solo-billed outing, however, a little space is cleared amidst the blammo electric guitars for some rattling acoustics; these perhaps lift *RTWN* from the filthier corners of his garage milieu to somewhere a shade more salubrious, yet only heighten his music's perennial sensation of juggernaut momentum. This textural addition also strongly connects When I Kicked Him In The Face and the title track to what Reis calls "pre-Vietnam War rock-'n'roll" (NB: US military involvement kicked in circa 1964!), as do bonus splashes of piano bass-riffin' (I Ain't Your Pawn) and outright boogie-woogie (Days Of Auld Lang Syne). With almighty Who-ish swagger, I Hate My Neighbours In The Yellow House is a career-best misanthropist's anthem.

Andrew Perry

Laibach: do the reich thing.

Valter Leban

Eyes on the prize: Kurt Vile searches for his basement tapes.

Feel like going home

Philly's wandering minstrel returns to his roots on epic ninth album. By Keith Cameron.

Kurt Vile

★★★★

(Watch My Moves)

VERVE. CD/DL/LP

KurtVile
(watch my moves)

FOR ALL that he venerates blue-collar Philadelphia and his schooling in the city's psychedelic underground, there's big ambition lurking beneath Kurt Vile's shaggy mane. Calling 2008's debut album *Constant Hitmaker* wasn't wholly unserious. His most recent release, the Speed, Sound, Lonely KV EP saw him conjoined in arpeggiated twang and harmony with his hero John Prine; days after their recording session the pair performed together at the Grand Ole Opry. Vile has consistently aligned towards essentially traditional musical contexts.

Work on *(Watch My Moves)*, his first LP since the Prine collaboration, was divided between Rob Schnapf's LA studio and 'OKV Central', Vile's newly-built home recording space, named in tribute to Tompall Glaser's Nashville outlaw country hub 'Hillbilly Central'. It boasts a console previously owned by Mitch Easter, whose work with R.E.M. and Pavement offers precedents for finding new connections to the past. Vile's recent albums – 2018's *Bottle It In* especially – have resembled sprawling assortments of emotional driftwood, made on the hoof around hectic tour schedules. Now, wanderlust curbed by global events, he palpably reconnects with his core sensibilities: Flyin' (Like A Fast Train) has him "Playin' in the music room in my underwear". Amid the meditative phase tapestry Palace Of OKV In Reverse, Vile hails "Roots pulled back down in the ground".

The freewheeling Kurt Vile still abides. *(Watch My Moves)'* default rhythm remains the stoned circuitous amble: "When I walk I'm dreamin', riding skateboards downhill," he muses in Chazzy Don't Mind, as Chastity Belt's Julia Shapiro harmonises in approval. Like Exploding Stones, a seven-minute lope through the KV brain's dustier crevices, is decorated with a synth line oddly adjacent to Foreigner's Waiting For A Girl Like You, while some hallmark dissociative meta-commentary ("Moog making noise now…"; "Guitars feeding back now") undercuts the notion that Vile simply makes this stuff up as the tape rolls. The elementary-class piano tutorial Goin' On A Plane Today – "Gonna chug a beer and curse my name" – has saxophone from Sun Ra Arkestra's James Stewart, and invocation of Neil Young, a KV touchstone for following the artistic nose.

Vile could fill an entire album with such charmed vignettes, and complaining would feel churlish. Far better, though, he stiffens the record's spine with a clutch of laser-crafted songs destined for the pantheon. The folk-country lament Cool Water ("Just like Hank sang") has a melody to make Nashville cats purr through their tears. Better still is Jesus On A Wire, where KV lends sympathetic ears to a woebegone messiah ("I wanna reach out to old Jesus/Tell him I, too, feel alone") over iridescent guitar-picking, and also drops the first of two Dinosaur Jr allusions ("'What a mess,' I sing to myself, thinkin' 'bout another song"). The second arrives in the opening line of Say The Word ("I wrote the words to this song driving from Philly to Amherst"; Vile produced the last Dino LP), a shiny blast of *Rumours*-vintage Fleetwood Mac choogle with on-point vocal detail from Cate Le Bon. The closing Stuffed Leopard nods to Bruce Springsteen ("I'm playin' Candy's Room") among its pedal-steel cumulus waves, but Vile has already nailed his boss credentials with a cover of *Born In The USA* outtake Wages Of Sin, its domestic psychodrama prompting KV's loneliest downbound train whistle.

At one-and-a-quarter hours, *(Watch My Moves)* is only five minutes shorter than *Bottle It In*, but feels much more happening. "I been doing this a long time, since before I was born," KV winks to the crowd amid Fo Sho's fuzzy electric boogie, "and it's prolly gonna be another long song." Constant hitmaker or beautiful waste of time: like all great alchemists, Kurt Vile proves you can be both.

Monster munch: Wet Leg's Rhian Teasdale and Hester Chambers.

Is This It

Isle Of Wight band get off the chaise longue to release debut. By Victoria Segal.

Wet Leg

★★★★

Wet Leg

DOMINO. CD/DL/LP

AS ALL one-hit wonders know, success can be as unforgiving as failure. There are songs that use all their energy in one brilliant efficient flash, making it almost impossible for their creators to relaunch or reignite, to catch the collective imagination so decisively ever again. It's the pop equivalent of a limited-edition action figure, still in its original packaging – get it out of its box, see what it could do, and there was a danger it could lose its value, end up in bits.

Chaise Longue, Wet Leg's first release, initially bore the marks of such a track, a giddily profane spasm of insolent wit backed by indelible visuals. Yet Rhian Teasdale and Hester Chambers, Wet Leg's core duo, subsequently released three more songs, each one the right amount of silly and strange, off-beam and familiar, the videos making lobster claws (the Wet Dream's erotic put-downs) or shaggy string-suits (social media meltdown Oh No) as distinctive as Chaise Longue's cottagecore South Park antics. While the returns have diminished reassuringly slowly, stretching into a whole album still feels treacherous. Are Wet Leg going to be The Strokes – or indie Gangnam Style? Does it matter (to their audience, at least) when they've already brought so much joy and intrigue?

While it would be lying to suggest *Wet Leg* runs the gamut of human emotion, happily Teasdale and Chambers have plenty more moods under those big straw hats. The cover shows them with their backs to the camera, embracing with conspiratorial closeness, and that indefinable Jack-and-Meg dynamic – the suggestion they aren't quite seeing what everyone else sees – shapes the whole album.

It's not as if their material is wildly esoteric. Parties gone wrong; romantic betrayals and turbulent exes; wavering self-belief and uncertain self-image – the songs on *Wet Leg* might feature mobile phones and dating apps, but they also echo a kind of slacker angst that matches their '90s indie influences. Kim Deal and Tanya Donelly are strong presiding spirits – especially on the sweet Breeders unease of Being In Love or the Gigantic melancholy of Piece Of Shit; you might notice the delicate echo of The Man Who Sold The World on I Don't Wanna Go Out first, but unafraid of overkill, Where Is My Mind? is in there too. Beyond the manic Pixies dream girls are traces of early St. Vincent, My Bloody Valentine, Blur (all on one song with Angelica's always-in-the-kitchen-at-parties anxiety). Convincing – with Chambers on vocals – and Loving You also show the delicate cracks of heartbreak, the flipside of that first "hey you, over there" defiance.

On the self-help frenzy of Too Late Now, Teasdale tries to second-guess herself, untangle where everything is going wrong, why life isn't working out like it should. *Wet Leg*, however, is the sound of a plan coming together – the novelty wearing off, but a different light switching on, all day long and beyond.

GO
GOLD
IN THE
YOUR
LOVE

Alabaster DePlume

★★★★

Gold

INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM. CD/DL/LP

Mancunian poet and saxophonist celebrates the art of collaboration.

Recorded over a fortnight at London jazz hub Total Refreshment Centre using different musicians each day – including Sarathy Korwar, Rozi Plain and Tom Skinner – *Gold* was pared down from over 17 hours of music and spliced together *à la* Makaya McCraven. The results are illuminating. Dubby basses, folky melodies, massed vocals, squeaks and squeals all pour into its immersive sound wash, DePlume adding a signature stamp with his uniquely raspy saxophone and endearingly honest wordplay. His vow to be "open and true and good" on mission statement I Will Not Be Safe is embraced by Guinea singer Falle Nioke, whose impassioned solo on Again is emblematic of the risk-taking alchemy at play. Thought-provoking yet full of fun, DePlume's willingness to dig deep has turned up a genuine treasure.

Andy Cowan

Edgar Winter

★★★

Brother Johnny

QUARTO VALLEY. CD/DL/LP

Keyboard maestro pays homage to his sibling, with a little help from their friends.

Edgar Winter
Brother Johnny

Edgar Winter's smartphone contacts include Ringo Starr, Joe Walsh and Billy Gibbons, as well as nouveau bluesmen Joe Bonamassa and Kenny Wayne Shepherd. Everybody brings their A-game to guitarist Johnny's back catalogue, but for every peak there's an occasional trough. Bonamassa's slide guitar blazes through Mean Town Blues and Gibbons' gravelly-voiced, nimble-fingered performance turns I'm Yours And I'm Hers into a '70s-era lost ZZ Top song. Less essential are new takes on Johnny B. Goode and Rock'N'Roll Hoochie Coo, and Foo Fighter Taylor Hawkins singing lead vocals on Guess I'll Go Away. In contrast, though, there's Keb' Mo's delicate Lone Star Blues, and Joe Walsh and lapsed Doobie Brother Michael McDonald's graceful ballad Stranger. All quibbles aside, this is a loving tribute, and listening to brother Johnny's acolytes here is a reminder of just how big a shadow he cast.

Mark Blake

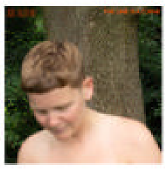
Kae Tempest

★★★★

The Line Is A Curve

FICTION. CD/DL/LP/MC

Lewisham rapper, poet and author's emotional fourth LP embraces "letting go".



As with 2019's *The Book Of Traps And Lessons*, Kae Tempest sticks to single takes on their first audio outing since coming out as trans/non-binary. Dan Carey's thrumming electronic menace backdrops the tight poetic metres of Salt Coast and fractious raps and unfiltered self-examination of I Saw Light (a duet with Fontaines D.C. frontman Grian Chatten), while Tempest's illuminating details ("I was in a party/Face mostly eyeballs") seemingly cow Brockhampton rapper Kevin Abstract on quasi club-banger More Pressure. These Are The Days feels uniquely personal, Tempest railing "I am right here! I am managing!" over a crowing brass motif. Conceptually looser than its predecessors, its preoccupations with resilience, acceptance and surrender sing through Tempest's soul-mining, secret-bearing wordplay, revealing a more intimate dimension to this incisive chronicler of beleaguered times.

Andy Cowan

Roger Eno

★★★

The Turning Year

DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON. CD/DL/LP

Evocative pastoral sketches by the composer and pianist.

A Place We Once Walked holds the key to this album, which Eno explains is generally about "how we catch fleeting glimpses… how we walk through our lives". And this is exactly how it feels, with a steady perambulating piano then a gorgeous string flourish, like a new vista has opened up. The combination of piano and the string ensemble Scoring Berlin has some overlap with the sonic contemplations of Max Richter and Arvo Pärt. But Eno has a distinctive style and picks just the right chord change or string colouration, as on the poignant title track. Intimate Distance is a meditative solo piano piece, its high melodic line twinkling away and spiced with some Satie-esque dissonances. By contrast, the translucent synths and deep bass rumbles of Stars And Wheels recall *Apollo*, Eno's collaboration with Daniel Lanois and brother Brian.

Mike Barnes

Hollie Fernando

Jack White

★★★★

Fear Of The Dawn

THIRD MAN. CD/DL/LP

Thrilling first part of White's 2022 double whammy.

If 2018's *Boarding House Reach* sometimes felt daunting in its eccentricity, a rough summary of Jack White's fourth solo album hardly promises a more straightforward ride. There's Q-Tip rapping over a Cab Calloway loop on Hi-De-Ho; samples of William Burroughs *and* MOR jazzers Manhattan Transfer on Into The Twilight; a touch of dub on Eosophobia; a whole heap of Rage Against The Machine-style rap metal on What's The Trick?. Weirdly, though, *Fear Of The Dawn* is also the most focused and exciting White solo record yet, a precision-tooled digital reconfiguration of his rock bona fides. The theremin-strafed title track, That Was Then (This Is Now) and Morning, Noon And Night – with its I Feel Fine coda – are, at heart, tearaway garage rock hits that could've fitted in the White Stripes songbook. The significance of a recurring vampiric subtext is unclear – perhaps July's rootsier follow-up, *Entering Heaven Alive*, will shed some light?

John Mulvey

Held By Trees

★★★

Solace

TWEED JACKET. CD/DL/LP

A sidemen's supergroup play a set inspired by Talk Talk's Mark Hollis

HELD BY TREES
SOLACE

Composer and multi-instrumentalist David Joseph assembled a group of musicians who had improvised on albums by Hollis and Talk Talk – including guitarist Robbie McIntosh and pianist Lawrence Pendrous –and invited them to do the same on his own compositions. Among other guests are Tim Renwick, who has played guitar with Pink Floyd, trumpeter Gary Alesbrook (Super Furry Animals; Noel Gallagher) and Dire Straits founder, guitarist David Knopfler. Next To Silence exemplifies Joseph's organic, expansive approach, with its field recordings and clarinet and sax drifting between the sparse piano chords. *Solace* is beautifully played throughout, with a particularly supple rhythm section, though at times it could benefit from a sharper focus. But there are striking moments, like the massive fuzz guitars of Tree Of Life segueing into a dialogue of muted brass, and the strange harmonium and guitar meditation of An Approach.

Mike Barnes

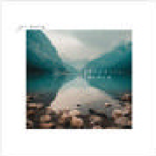
Joy Ellis

★★★

Peaceful Place

OTI-O. CD/DL

Moody, minimalist instrumental effort from jazz singer-songwriter.



Unable to find the words to capture the grief and sense of loss wrought by recent events, this Guildhall School graduate and regular Samba Azul collaborator sought solace in her piano, summoning a series of cerebral soundscapes ideally suited to a dark and intimate bar. While the fluid combinations of Eat, Sleep, Repeat play with unlikely notes to evoke workaday despair, the title track's twinkling, light-fingered descents trace through several movements in quick succession. Sensitively backed by drummer Adam Osmianski (who displays a whole box of tricks on upbeat counterpoint Silver Linings) and double bassist Henrik Jensen (who adds abiding warmth to Cascade's resonant hooks), *Peaceful Place* variously reminds of Keith Jarrett, Brad Mehldau and Bill Evans. Its unbroken atmosphere is testament to the trio's chemistry, their musicianship never overwhelming the material.

Andy Cowan

TWO RIBBONS
LET'S EAT GRANDMA

Let's Eat Grandma

★★★

Two Ribbons

TRANSGRESSIVE. CD/DL/LP

Norwich duo's deeply heartfelt third album.

Childhood friends Rosa Walton and Jenny Hollingworth became bandmates at 13/14 years old and then startlingly accomplished and adventurous album debutantes at 16/17 with *I, Gemini*'s self-described "experimental sludge pop." Follow-up *I'm All Ears*' mix of electronica and piano ballads underpinned their anxieties as the world sped up around them, a theme which *Two Ribbons* extends as a dialogue between two friends almost inevitably needing space from each other. The first half of the album is techno-pop, finely balancing euphoria and heartache. In Happy New Year, Rosa sings: "And nothing that was broken can touch how much I care for you/Because you know you'll always be my best friend." The subsequent ballads' more fragile intensity ends with the title track. "Like two ribbons, still woven although we are fraying," sings Jenny, "I can only be your best friend/And hope that that's enough/But I know that's not enough."

Martin Aston

Susanna

★★★★

Elevation

SUSANNASONATA. CD/DL/LP/MC

Otherworldly Nordic interpretations of French Symbolist poet Baudelaire.

Two years ago, Norway's Susanna Wallumrød released *Baudelaire & Piano*, a rendering of the French writer's poems. Sparse and crepuscular, it featured just her voice and piano. Now, further stating her commitment to the Gallic literary giant, *Elevation* places 12 more of his works within a broader setting. On two-thirds of the tracks, the former leader of Susanna And The Magical Orchestra is complemented by Delphine Dora's French-language recitations and/or Stina Stjern's atmospheric electronics. While the solo Invitation To The Voyage is direct and intense, L'aube Spirituelle unites Dora's reading, Wallumrød's wraith-like wordless vocal and Stjern's crackling, windswept backdrop. Overall, the atmosphere is ritualistic. Fittingly, the album's cover image makes a significant connection. Using an artwork by American Aleister Crowley acolyte Marjorie Cameron associates Baudelaire with occult worlds. No wonder, then, that *Elevation* appears to tap into something other.

Kieron Tyler

Red Hot Chili Peppers

★★★

Unlimited Love

WARNER. CD/DL/LP

Rock giants rediscover past powers on Rick Rubin-produced twelfth album.

UNLIMITED LOVE
RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS

After a somewhat rudderless past decade, Red Hot Chili Peppers have clearly been galvanised by guitarist John Frusciante's return from self-imposed exile in 2009. The prodigal son is back, and his fretboard is on fire. Be it the ecstatic extended solo on The Great Apes or the way Black Summer deftly changes gears from drowsy jangle to stadium-calibrated anthem, the results are some of RHCP's strongest songs since 2002's *By The Way*. So energetic are their efforts to relight that elemental spark that they occasionally seem blinded by it. *Unlimited Love*'s sprawling 17 tracks almost inevitably include a few free-spirited missteps, with Aquatic Mouth Dance and Poster Child getting stuck in a groove. Nevertheless, an impressive consolidation of their strengths.

George Garner

Gabriel Kahane

★★★★

Magnificent Bird

NONESUCH. CD/DL/LP

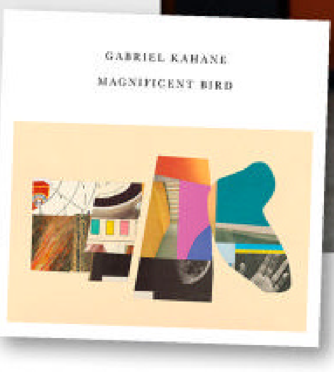
Chronicling "the final month of a year spent off the internet."

AS CREATIVE CHAIR for the Oregon Symphony in Portland, and a writer of piano concertos and acclaimed song cycles, Gabriel Kahane brings tremendous sophistication to his fifth album. There's nothing highfalutin about these deft, prose poem-like songs, though: an illuminating humanity is absolutely key as he reports on self-isolating pensioners (Linda & Stuart), the corrosive effects of news doom-scrolling (The Hazelnut Tree), and his artistic jealousy after reading someone else's rave review (title track). Fine players such as Alexandra Sopp (woodwind) and Pekka Kuusisto (violin) raise the bar still higher, Kahane tapping baroque and jazz motifs alongside nods to The Beach Boys and mid-period Paul Simon. "This is the new age of anxiety," he sings at one point, while Sit Shiva is a moving, ultimately uplifting evocation of grief via Zoom. A most eloquent exploration of our current lot.

James McNair

Gabriel Kahane: he can't come to the phone right now.

Jason Quigley



Hare apparent: Father John Misty communes with nature.

Tillman Schmillman

Alternate reality Hollywood explored via high-definition orchestral manoeuvres.
By Tom Doyle.

Father John Misty

★★★★

Chloë And The Next 20th Century

BELLA UNION. CD/DL/LP

GIVEN HOW Josh Tillman's now-decade-long adventure as Father John Misty has pursued Harry Nilsson and Randy Newman more than any lasting traces of his former band Fleet Foxes, it was perhaps inevitable that his career would wend its way towards an orchestral or standards-style album. But while there are echoes of *Sail Away* and *A Little Touch Of Schmilsson In The Night* in Misty's fifth, the overall effect is of a Hollywood album moving from the '30s through to the '60s and melding those influences to create an imagined version of the past.

For Tillman, topping 2017's masterful, 75-minute long, end of days conceptual record *Pure Comedy* was always going to be a challenge. So, on 2018's *God's Favorite Customer*, he didn't really try, ending up with a fairly straight collection of songs. Four years on, it seems, it was time for another grand gesture, and one involving a reunion with Jonathan Wilson (co-producer of the first three Misty albums) and full-scale orchestral scores recorded at United Recordings in LA – fittingly the scene of historic sessions by everyone from Frank Sinatra to Glen Campbell.

Opener Chloë, and side two's Only A Fool, impress in terms of their elaborate, '30s/'40s-styled strings, horns and woodwind arrangements, but play it strictly trad. Things get more interesting when the Vaseline-on-the-lens blurring begins, such as when Tillman's voice is fed through disorientating tremolo in Kiss Me (I Loved You) or when the orchestration backgrounds an examination of the modern Hollywood star system in Funny Girl, with its central character a "five-foot Cleopatra" flashing a "manic smile".

Underscoring the great American songbook vibes, one of the highlights here, Buddy's Rendezvous, an elegant sketch of LA ambition and ennui, has already been covered by Lana Del Rey on a 7-inch available with the limited-edition vinyl version of the album. It's a chancy, if successful move, proving that Tillman's writerly skills likely would have shone in any era.

Similarly, in Goodbye, Mr Blue, even when sailing close to Nilsson's reading of Fred Neil's Everybody's Talkin', he offers a moving reminder of the beauty of life's impermanence ("This may be the last time I lay here with you"). Matched to slo-mo strings, tumbling acoustic guitar and brushed snare drum skipping over the ocean like a stone, it's way more than homage.

Closing with the seven-minute The Next 20th Century, Tillman relates a never-more-Misty shaggy dog tale involving a Nazi wedding band and Val Kilmer's full-length mirror circa his Batman period, before finding comfort in classic pop culture amid our discomfiting present and uncertain future, as if tuning into radio waves broadcast long ago: "I'll take the love songs/And the great distance that they came." Ultimately, then, as *Chloë And The Next 20th Century* sees Father John Misty escaping into his own parallel Hollywood reality, it's highly entertaining to slip in alongside him.

Calexico

★★★★

El Mirador

CITY SLANG. CD/DL/LP

Tucson duo relocate, separately, to El Paso and Boise, and craft a love letter.

A crackly gas-panicked commotion announces a melodramatic sting from what sounds like a 1940s noir: cue more mariachi mystery carefully balanced on John Convertino and Joey Burns's tenth studio LP. A nod to the Strepsil spirit of Tom Waits mimics talk of "a kerosene lamp… a crumpled-up hat," while percussionist/accordionist Sergio Mendoza's new home studio has a cumbian christening. Those unable to join the hoedown sent files from Mexico to Germany via the desert: Guatemalan Gaby Moreno and Sam Beam vocalise on Harness The Wind; El Paso depicts "Tupelo frozen on a laptop screen"; tense Liberada cries revolution, and The El Burro Song typifies Burns's dream of a pan-lingual "borderless" world.

Andrew Collins

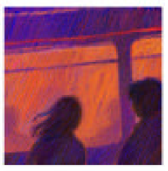
Deanna Petcoff

★★★

To Hell With You, I Love You

ROYAL MOUNTAIN. CD/DL/LP

Auspicious debut from bolshy, literate Canadian.



When she gets revved up, Toronto-based Petcoff could be the love-child of Liz Phair, Alanis Morissette and Ric Ocasek. "Sorry I'm a trash bag, I really wanna see you/But I got lotsa shit that's going on," notes her laconic vocal, fizzing against ringing Rickenbacker. "I'm acting kinda stupid/Get. Used. To. It." Complete with blazing mid-point rock out, Trash Bag is exactly the kind of cathartic, heart-on-sleeve takedown we need right now. Devastatingly Mediocre kicks off speedy as the Buzzcocks; Failing Upwards has a smooth and synthy Cars-style beat, undercut by Petcoff's joyously serrated tenor: "I'm a little uptight sometimes/But I don't like feeling like a trophy wife." The more earnest tracks occasionally dull down, though Sing With Me is affectingly resigned – but the ferocious, faux-sarcastic stuff ("Hope you still like me when I finally put my clothes on") shows her vulnerability even better.

Glyn Brown

S. Carey

★★★

Break Me Open

JAGJAGUWAR. CD/DL/LP

Bon Iver member weaves midlife trauma into lulling ambient folk.

Weighty are the midlife crises that inspired Sean Carey's fourth solo album: divorce, the loss of a parent, not to mention all the wider existential threats. So it's impressive that he can translate all this anxiety into such weightless music. *Break Me Open* doesn't stray too far from his day job: acoustic sounds, electronic elements and breathy harmonies massaged into serene ambient folk, all edges polished smooth. The grit is found in the words Carey sweetly sings: in the regrets of Waking Up, the inevitabilities of Desolate, in how much deeper the passage of time cuts when you're a parent (Paralyzed). Honestly and ably capturing his haunted stasis, Carey's a sparingly poetic lyricist. When his music rises to match the power of his words – the strings-and-horn-laden crescendo of Crestfallen – the results are stirring.

Stevie Chick

Warmduscher

★★★

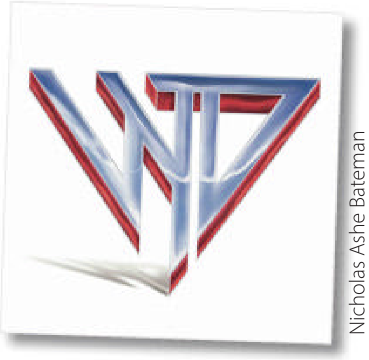
At The Hotspot

BELLA UNION. CD/DL/LP

Fat White Family offshoot's offbeat fourth.

In amongst FWF's fractured family tree, this somewhat esoteric side-project seemed least likely to endure, not least since both Lias Saoudi and Saul Adamczewski have gradually deserted its ranks, leaving just guitarist Adam J Harmer representing the mother band, alongside assorted Insecure Men wrong 'uns and NYC cod-funk frontman Clams Baker. With previous records' producer Dan Carey prevented by Covid from marshalling the chaos, this time Hot Chip's Joe Goddard and Al Doyle step up. In places, it's a fortuitous development, as the pair bring a fitting smoothness to the cheesey exotica groove of Wild Flowers, and a swinging clarity to Fatso's '80s P-Funk electro-grind. Elsewhere, *At The Hotspot* can be too hectic for wider recommendation: Double Vision is nightmarish at both its tempos, and Baker's relentless innuendo soon wilts.

Andrew Perry



Nicholas Ashe Bateman

QUITTERS
CHRISTIAN LEE HUTSON

Christian Lee Hutson

★★★★

Quitters

ANTI-. CD/DL/LP

LA soft-rocker's fourth; his second with best pal Phoebe Bridgers overseeing.

Quitters' cover image of a bath-robed figure by the edge of a swimming pool, gazing blankly at the water, hints at the stories within. Hutson spins yarns with a dizzying lexicon of wordplay and imagery, but explanations aren't part of his deal; what to make of these lines from Age Difference: "Do my impression of John Malkovich/Critiquing food in prison/At first it isn't funny, then it is, and then it isn't". They're housed in a gorgeous, wan melody, in line with Hutson's softly thrumming and humming sound and voice, comparable to both Elliott Smith and co-producer (with Conor Oberst) Phoebe Bridgers. In common with those influences, Hutson playfully obfuscates. "I am the New Jersey State Bird," he declares. "A bandana on a broomstick/ You can't fire me 'cos I quit."

Martin Aston

El Khat

★★★

Aalbat Alawi Op.99

GLITTERBEAT. CD/DL/LP

A further excursion into re-imagined Yemeni sounds.

A son of the Yemeni diaspora, Eyal el Wahab bluffed his way into the Jerusalem Andalusian Orchestra as a cellist but quit to form El Khat after hearing a compilation of traditional Yemeni music from the 1960s, using self-made instruments to stretch the band's musical boundaries. Debut album *Saadia Jefferson* was couched in funk and psychedelic shades, but its follow-up has looser frames of reference. On much of the album, instruments drop in and out of the mix at unexpected intervals, with Djaja overpowered by swirling female choruses at times, before moving to disjointed percussive interludes, shifting the focus between the traditions of the past and the limitless potentials of future stylings. Band theme song El Khat has searing desert guitar and Leilat Al Henna's mournful vocals, as violin and ghostly organ conjure a distant, unknown homeland.

David Katz

Christian Lee Hutson: never been a quitter.

Michael Delaney, Judith Burrows

MOLLY TUTTLE
& GOLDEN HIGHWAY
CROOKED TREE

Molly Tuttle & Golden Highway

★★★★

Crooked Tree

NONESUCH. CD/DL/LP

Bluegrass's young Californian trailblazer treads pastures new.

Long lauded for her flat-picking and crosspicking guitar gifts, as well as her songwriting, Santa Clara County's Molly Tuttle needs no supporting cast, but this LP with her new bluegrass collective Golden Highway is a dazzling pass-the-parcel of Nashville cats showboating. Its fine songs take precedence though, Tuttle extolling non-conformity on the title track ("Crooked tree won't fit in the mill machine"), Gillian Welch guesting on playful tomboy song Side Saddle, and Castilleja firing on just a hint of Dolly Parton's Jolene. With venerable lap-steel virtuoso Jerry Douglas co-producing, everything sounds alive, vital and perfectly in focus. "I found out when I was young/A farmer's day is never done," sings Tuttle alongside Margo Price on standout track Flatland Girl; *Crooked Tree* is a bountiful harvest, fruit of more dedicated application.

James McNair

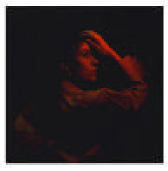
Léon

★★★

Circles

LL ENTERTAINMENT/BMG. CD/DL/LP

Third album from Stockholm's Lotta Lindgren.



In 2020, when Léon seemed on the cusp of a breakthrough, lacklustre second album *Apart* put her ascension to the mainstream on hold. Two years on, she's retrenched and *Circles* is the great leap forwards she had promised. As ever, she's a chronicler of relationships, be they good (Soaked) or struggling (the irresistibly catchy Fade Into A Dream), while her up-front vocals add old-school comfort rather than new-fangled detachment as she evokes both Maggie Reilly's turn on Mike Oldfield's Moonlight Shadow (there's even a track called Moonlight) and Christine McVie. She's no anachronism though. Her backdrops vary from the warm synthesizer wash of Wildest Dreams to the more acoustic Wishful Thinking, via Lift You Up's subtle dance undertow. *Circles* is in no hurry to unfurl its charms, but they're worth digging deep for.

John Aizlewood

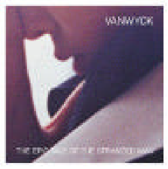
VanWyck

★★★★

The Epic Tale Of The Stranded Man

EXCELSION. CD/DL/LP

Fourth album from Dutch singer-writer Christien Oele.

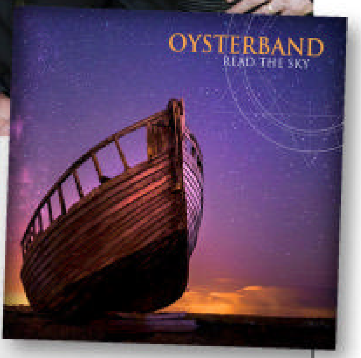


"A man washes ashore on an island. He is severely wounded and doesn't remember where he comes from. A woman takes the Stranded Man in," VanWyck writes in the linernotes, "and tries to nurse him back to health." The 12 songs on this strange, lovely album are all based around this story, which feels part myth, part fairy tale, part Jungian analysis. The music, in turn, is part folk and part orchestral. More textured and layered than *God Is In The Detour*, her previous album, *The Epic Tale…* still has that sense of sparseness and space and sounds every bit as beautiful. Subtle strings wash a cold and loneliness over opening track The Stranded Man, tinkling piano and folk guitar accompany the mysterious Seaweed Seller, while The Havoc Weaver is rhythmic. Highlights include: The Smiling Prophet; The Way Out; and Maybe, Maybe Not, like a one-woman Simon & Garfunkel.

Sylvie Simmons

FOLK

BY COLIN IRWIN



Oysterband

★★★★

Read The Sky

RUNNING MAN RECORDS. CD/DL

Folk rock lives… and tells the tale.

Hardy old veterans they may be, but Oysterband can still belt out a killer tune and a compelling lyric with the best of them. Indeed, better than most. Amid recurring themes of land and sea, they tackle their task with rare urgency and valour, John Jones' voice still magnificent, and the tough arrangements and musical barrage around him delivered with blistering gusto. The album root is a series of urgent beats, while fiddle and guitars interact with the conviction and inventiveness that comes from a lifetime on the road – there's even a rare Alan Prosser vocal lead on the retro Hungry For That Water, while Jones channels his inner Roy Orbison on Streams Of Innocence. They end in an alarming wail of despair on The Time Is Now ("The air we breathe, the tears we need to weep/We know too much to look the other way"). Their fourteenth album, and they still have plenty to say.

ALSO RELEASED

Alaw

★★★★

Denwyd i'r Goleuni/ Drawn To The Light

TAITH. CD/DL

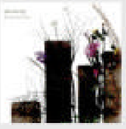
Another impressive Welsh language project from guitarist Dylan Fowler and fiddle playing stepson Oliver Wilson-Dickson. With singer/harmonium player Nia Lynn, they've struck a rich stream of relaxed interplay and emotional purity. There's pure joy in the clarity of the instrumentals, but the vocal tracks earn their corn too; Hiraeth (Longing) is a thing of real beauty. Their name translates from Welsh as 'melody' – and they deliver.

Bird In The Belly

★★★

After The City

GFM. CD/DL



This Brighton quartet wield an impressive menace and intensity suggestive of medieval horror, stemming largely from lead singers Laura Ward and Ben Webb, whose voices clash in a bizarre yet captivating mix of Ward's measured elegance and Webb's gravelly intensity. Appropriately, this album is themed on and inspired by a 'post-apocalyptic' novel (After London) written in 1885 by Richard Jefferies, with broadside ballads and adapted poems among the evocative source material.

Heal & Harrow

★★★

Heal & Harrow

SHADOWSIDE. CD/DL

Vocalist Rachel Newton and fiddle-player Lauren MacColl, two of Scotland's most revered artisans, unite to detail the horrifying fates – in an affecting mix of harp and violin surrounding songs in English and Gaelic – of victims of the 1563 Witchcraft Act. Based in part on the research of writer Mairi Kidd, its harrowing tales include farmer's wife Isobel Gowdie – accused of sexual relations with Satan – and cross-dresser Christian Caldwell. Not for the squeamish.

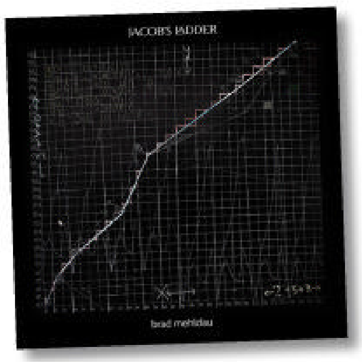
Peter Knight & John Spiers

★★★

Both In A Tune

KNIGHT & SPIERS. CD/DL

Improvisation isn't for everyone. But when you've got the old Steeleye/ Gigspanner maestro Knight holding court on violin and Bellowhead squeezebox king Spiers diving off into uncharted territory from a standing start of dance tunes, laments, slow airs and marches, their magical mystery tour demands to be followed closely. It begins with an extraordinarily beautiful variant on Scarborough Fair, ends in a darkly stark Battle Of The Somme, and visits all destinations between. *CI*



Brad Mehldau

★★★★

Jacob's Ladder

NONESUCH. CD/DL/LP

Jazz pianist channels his inner Rick Wakeman.

It's always been difficult second-guessing what Brad Mehldau will do next. Just when you think you've pinned him down musically, he'll surprise you by jettisoning acoustic piano for synthesizers or composing an orchestral suite. Arguably, his most intriguing works have resulted from him exploring different sonic universes; such as 2014's synth-heavy *Mehliana* and 2019's *Finding Gabriel*, an epic fusion of jazz, rock and classical music inspired by the Bible. Like the latter album, *Jacob's Ladder* also has a spiritual message; about finding redemption through God. Sonically, it's a kaleidoscopic affair where baroque prog-rock edifices (including a churning cover of Rush's Tom Sawyer) are juxtaposed with clouds of ethereal choirs, dreamy piano interludes, and squalls of free jazz-style clarinet. Skilfully weaving these elements into storytelling sound collages, Mehldau takes the listener on a memorable musical journey.

Charles Waring

Hannah Peel & Paraorchestra

★★★

The Unfolding

REAL WORLD. CD/DL/LP

The Northern Irish composer explores time and the roots of life.

When the Paraorchestra's director Charles Hazlewood commissioned Peel to write a piece, she was impressed by individual players in the orchestra and tailored some of the parts specifically for them, particularly singer Victoria Oruwari. The Universe Before Matter has the feel of an Irish air, with Oruwari's voice soaring over strings and Debussy-ish flutes and clarinets, which are then punctuated by dramatic percussion and explosive gongs. *The Unfolding* is an inventive and accessible mix of acoustic instruments and electronics with an elemental atmosphere. Wild Animal is brooding and rhythmically knotty and Part Cloud a more serene song on which the female voices, Peel's included, carry echoes of Philip Glass's *North Star*, and the bass clarinet lines have a touch of Steve Reich about them. But, ultimately, the combination of tuned percussion, Peel's synth patterns and long string lines sounds fresh and original.

Mike Barnes

Jeremiah Chiu & Marta Sofia Honer

★★★★

Recordings From The Åland Islands

INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM. CD/DL/LP

Ambient field trip to a Baltic archipelago.

Music journalists have long been prone to make up new genres at the drop of a hat, but something akin to an 'ambient jazz' moment really does seem to be happening. To file alongside Floating Points & Pharoah Sanders' MOJO Album Of 2021 *Promises*, Nala Sinephro's *Space 1.8* and various records involving Carlos Niño and Sam Gendel, we can now add this enveloping set. Chiu, a keyboardist, and Honer, a viola player who's worked on sessions for Beyoncé and Fleet Foxes, left their LA home to spend time on the Åland Islands, a remote location between Sweden and Finland. These field recordings, New Age epiphanies and beatific jams are the results of the trip: an immersive audio tour that acts as a kind of Baltic analogue to ambient jazz pin-up boy Jon Hassell's more equatorial excursions.

John Mulvey

Maridalen

★★★★

Bortenfor

JAZZLAND. CD/DL

Norwegian jazz trio stretch their storytelling legs on dauntless second outing.

Recorded, sparingly, in the same old wooden church by Lake Maridal as 2021's deep and spacious self-titled debut, Maridalen's second LP finds the minimalist trio shaking up their winning formula. Pivoted around a single piano note, Der Hvor Vi Ikke Kunne Gå finds breathily close-miked saxophonist Anders Hefre and trumpeter Jonas Kilmork Vemøy intertwining melodies as they blink into the spring sunshine, their Reich-like repetitions on Månesykkel undercut by Andreas Rødland Haga's bowed double bass (a winning trick that resurfaces on the wistful Bilder Fra En Film). The expanded sonic palette extends to the deep hypnotic groove of Sandermosen, played on kitchen utensils, and Emil Brattested's yearning pedal steel on I Havn. More exploratory and off-piste than its predecessor, the meditative, wholly dud-free *Bortenfor* excels in catalysing beauty from relatively simple sources.

Andy Cowan

Papercuts

★★★★

Past Life Regression

LABELMAN. CD/DL/LP/MC

Woozy, shoegazing-inflected take on '60s baroque pop.

On *Past Life Regression*'s eighth track Hypnotist, Papercuts' main-man Jason Quever sounds, well, as if he is in a trance. His defeated voice delivers enigmatic lines seemingly reflecting on the passing of time. "Tick-tock, alarm clock," he intones. His guitar is loosely yet insistently strummed, and a circular keyboard motif intimates an even more underwater version of The Chills. Quever has been trading as Papercuts for close to 20 years and *Past Life Regression* is his seventh album under the name; following-up 2018's *Parallel Universe Blues*. Recently, he's produced Dean Wareham, formerly of Galaxie 500. Beach House were a past client. All of which sets a framework, but on his new album Quever enters fresh territory, evoking Curt Boettcher's baroque folk rock (I Want My Jacket Back) and, oddly, Primal Scream's earliest iteration (Sinister Smile). A shoegazing-inclined Zombies sums it up.

Kieron Tyler

Taj Mahal & Ry Cooder

★★★

Get On Board: The Songs Of Sonny Terry & Brownie McGhee

NONESUCH. CD/DL/LP

Taj and Ry's first joint recordings since they were in '60s act The Rising Sons.

Now 79 and 74 respectively, Mahal and Cooder are giving back here like so often before. As they revive and curate earthy (see Deep Sea Diver), animated songs by harmonica ace Sonny Terry and Piedmont blues guitar luminary Brownie McGhee, there is clearly love in the room. With Cooder's son Joachim on drums or bass for live takes on the Deep South-imbued Terry & McGhee tunes Taj and Ry first doted on as teenagers, there's much spontaneity afoot, Taj's 'Mississippi saxophone' (harmonica) and Ry's guitar, mandolin or banjo in vibrant, fruitful dialogue. "Who's going to play [agrarian folk-blues] Pick A Bale Of Cotton if we don't?" Cooder has said, but Packing Up Getting Ready To Go is seriously funky and gutsy opener My Baby Done Changed The Lock On The Door reminds us some themes remain eternal.

James McNair

Plosivs

★★★★

Plosivs

SWAMI. DL/LP

Debut by San Diego punk supergroup featuring Hot Snakes/Rocket From The Crypt/Pinback linchpins.

Plosivs: blowing minds wide open.

A GROUP reuniting Hot Snakes' guitarist John Reis with erstwhile Rocket From The Crypt drummer Atom Willard in a team-up with Pinback vocalist Rob Crow plus Mrs Magician bassist Jordan Clark already feels like a SoCal post-hardcore shoo-in. Yet the reality actually exceeds expectation. Named for a consonant made by stopping then releasing air, Plosivs broadly resemble Hot Snakes' maniacal algorithmic drive smoothed over by foregrounding Crow's melancholy high-register peal. His stacked self-harmonies, worthy of prime Hart and Mould or Mills and Stipe, lend Rose Waterfall and Pines a celestial purity, while Willard's centrifugal floor-tom switchbacks propel Iron Will and Broken Eyes into towering realms of manic nirvana. The nigh blemish-free 10-song arc concludes with Bright, as Crow declares, "The brightest serve the dumb, I'm at a loss which one we are" amid the edgy pummel. Plosivs are set to pop minds wide open.

Keith Cameron

Here comes the big chill: Fontaines D.C. acting out their shadowplay.

Distance Learning

Dublin quintet explore heart and home on third album. By Victoria Segal.

Fontaines D.C.

★★★★

Skinty Fia

PARTISAN. CD/DL/LP

"WHEN YOU speak/Speak sincere/And believe me friend, everyone will hear," sang Grian Chatten on the wisdom-dispensing title track of Fontaines D.C.'s last album, 2020's *A Hero's Death*. There is always the danger that "sincerity" can be used as cover for a multitude of on-the-nose, salt-of-the-earth sins, but with *Skinty Fia* (an old Irish exclamation meaning "the damnation of the deer"), it's clear just how acute this band's understanding of the balance between art and heart has become.

If *A Hero's Death* was partly informed by the seismic upheaval caused by the saviours-of-guitar-music success of 2019 debut *Dogrel*, *Skinty Fia* emerges from less frenetic circumstances, a deep appraising breath, a chance to burrow deep into love, identity, the shifts and pressures of building new lives away from Ireland. The youthful buoyancy of *Dogrel* has ebbed away; there's a chill deep into the bones of these big, bold songs.

From arrestingly ecclesiastical opener In ár gCroíthe Go Deo ("In Our Hearts Forever"), a beautiful choral swell building under Chatten's furious lyrics of loss and parting, a pall settles that rarely lifts. Big Shot, with lyrics by guitarist Carlos O'Connell, feels like a sad mirror image of *Dogrel*'s defiant Big, the paths of escape not as easy as once hoped – "Found the moon too small/And home is a pin/Rusting through a map." The notion of home is complicated throughout: Roman Holiday's expansive guitar rushes mask a raw unease being at large in a strange-ish land; the hectic I Love You ranges across Irish politics and history, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, "Sharks with children's bones stuck in their jaws". Bloomsday, meanwhile, casts off the inclination to romanticise with a vicious Joy Division clang, refusing to hide behind the tourist-friendly, the elegantly curated.

If the political is complicated, the personal is no less fraught. Jackie Down The Line lands like a disturbing short story about septic masculinity, its punchy, grease-stained swagger evoking The Smiths of Barbarism Begins At Home or How Soon Is Now?. The title track draws on a particular strain of early 2000s electronica, the not-raving-but-frowning gothic narratives of Death In Vegas, to unpick its paranoias and loss of self. Relationships, meanwhile, are viewed with an unstintingly forensic eye, from the needling repetitions of How Cold Love Is to The Couple Across The Way, a song backed by the accordion Chatten received for Christmas that uses a fractious old couple as a haunting cautionary tale for young lovers.

Such spectres lurk on every song, yet dour contemplation never greys out into pure ennui or indistinct rage. *Skinty Fia* – both phrase and record – might hint at a grim extinction event, but by staring down the prospect of built-in obsolescence, the loss of self, Fontaines D.C. sound full of new life.

"We took from Nine Inch Nails."

Conor 'Deego' Deegan speaks to Victoria Segal.

What was the mood like when you reunited to make *Skinty Fia*?

"It was good for us to have space from each other, really being able to live our own lives and be our own people. We came back together with loads of different influences for the songs. So, for Jackie Down The Line, I'd been experimenting with all these different kind of pedals, I'd been trying to work out sounds like Nine Inch Nails. I think that was the kind of thing you could only come up with if you had a load of time on your hands. There's a lot to be taken from Nine Inch Nails in terms of arrangements and instrumentation. That kind of fragile approach to beauty, even among the earlier brash stuff."

That "fragile approach to beauty" is apparent on opening track In ár gCroíthe Go Deo ("In Our Hearts Forever").

"It's a very strange song to play. We were actually laughing when we were writing it. It was me and [guitarist Conor] Curley singing this minor harmony like choirboys, singing in Irish. When the drums come in there's that moment of hope and uplift. It's about a woman who wasn't allowed to put "In ár gCroíthe Go Deo" on her gravestone in England because the town council saw it as a political thing to put the Irish language on a gravestone."

How did the accordion-based The Couple Across The Way take shape?

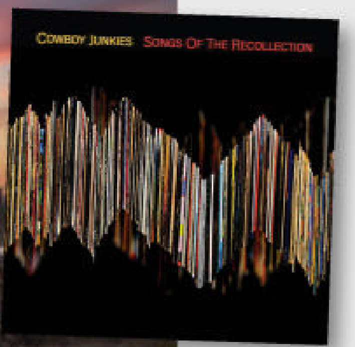
"We had this ambition of making a double album. One half was going to be the record it is now, the other half was going to be Irish traditional music, or new songs we'd written in the style of Irish traditional music. We've all written songs like that over the years, we've got a lot of them. The Couple Across The Way was one of those. The story behind the song itself is that Grian opened one of his windows and could hear his older neighbours arguing a lot. He was living with his fiancée, and he was wondering about the difference between old love and young love, hopes and fears. We'd all read Stoner [the 1965 novel by John Williams] as well. We all got really obsessed with that book last year, so I think he was thinking about that when he wrote it as well. I think it has a similar tone, a similar conciseness to the tragedy of it, you know?"

Is *Skinty Fia* the final part of a trilogy?

"I always dreamed as a teenager of making three great albums, like Nirvana had. That was my ambition – so now that we've done that, I don't really mind what we do."

Credit in here

The immaculate ...*Recollection*: Cowboy Junkies serve up a fine covers LP.



Cowboy Junkies

★★★★

Songs Of The Recollection

PROPER. CD/DL/LP

Toronto band follows 2018's acclaimed *All That Reckoning* with covers album.

On paper it might sound like a filler – nine songs, none of them original, some newly recorded, some not – but to listen to it's wonderful. Which should be no surprise given the number of other people's songs the Junkies have tackled over the decades, on-stage and on record. This one starts with a pretty faithful Bowie cover – Five Years: a nod to *Pin-Ups* perhaps, or the climate crisis? – followed by an eerie Ooh Las Vegas (Gram Parsons) and a dreamy Americana No Expectations (Rolling Stones). There's a couple of Neil Young songs, one dramatic, one sweet, a soundscapey Cure track and a dark country take on Gordon Lightfoot's The Way I Feel. But best of all: Dylan's recent I've Made Up My Mind To Give Myself To You, sounding like a slow, beautiful hymn; and Vic Chesnutt's Marathon, its soft, slow sadness, melted vocals and spooky guitar both powerful and heartbreaking.

Sylvie Simmons

Daniel Rossen

★★★★

You Belong There

WARP. CD/DL/LP

Grizzly Bear singer goes it alone.

Chamber-pop artisans of American indie in the first decade of this century, Grizzly Bear's current status is uncertain, with co-frontman Ed Droste having departed to become a therapist in 2020. The band's other singer Daniel Rossen, however, remains nobly committed to the Grizzly Bear aesthetic. This debut solo album is as ornate as 2009's outstanding *Veckatimest*, with Rossen now playing almost all the buccaneering acoustic guitars, cascading piano lines, cellos and woodwind himself (old bandmate Chris Bear returns, on drums). Fleet Foxes' *Shore*, on which Rossen guested, is a good reference point for *You Belong There*; a sort of folk rock baroque, grandiose but not flamboyant, that sits in the space between Paul Simon and Van Dyke Parks. Celia, in particular, is a beauty, not least because Rossen seems perpetually on the verge of slipping into Surf's Up.

John Mulvey

DANIEL ROSSEN
YOU BELONG
THERE

Michael Bublé

★★★

Higher

WARNER BROS/REPRISE. CD/DL/LP

Canadian singer's eleventh studio album boasts big name cameos.

Twenty years ago, Bublé was a struggling lounge crooner whose first two self-released albums met with public indifference. But his career took an upward turn when he came into the orbit of über-producer David Foster, who signed the vocalist to his 143 label and helmed 2003's commercially triumphant *Michael Bublé* album. Nineteen years on, Bublé is a multi-platinum megastar who's able to persuade Paul McCartney to sit in the producer's chair for one track on his latest opus; a stunning Sinatra-esque version of the ex-Beatle's own My Valentine, which is swathed in swooning orchestral strings. It's the highpoint of a 13-song set that also includes a duet with Willie Nelson (Crazy) and whose material ranges from Bob Dylan and Barry White covers to silky jazz standards and slick contemporary pop numbers. Not everything comes off though, such as an obscenely schmaltzy revamp of Charlie Chaplin's Smile.

Charles Waring

Mike Campbell & The Dirty Knobs

★★★

External Combustion

BMG. CD/DL/LP

Heartbreaker's side-project's second album.

If there's something toe-curling about a man in his seventies calling his band The Dirty Knobs, then Mike Campbell – Tom Petty's sidekick for over 40 years, but late of Fleetwood Mac – surely doesn't care. Grungy, scuzzy and for all the covert craft of the playing, unashamedly garage, the George Drakoulias-produced *External Combustion* is the sound of an older gentleman re-visiting his youth. Guitar solos and fairly late nights ("I didn't get home 'til way past midnight") abound, while the very first days of rock'n'roll are evoked on Brigitte Bardot and Ian Hunter adds further grizzle to the frenetic adultery tale Dirty Job: "someone got to do it, it might as well be me". Lightning Boogie is as unimaginative as its title, but when they calm down on In This Lifetime, they twinkle, while Margo Price brings stately reflection to the brass-tinged centrepiece State Of Mind.

John Aizlewood

EXTERNAL COMBUSTION
Mike Campbell
& the dirty knobs

Seafoam Walls

★★★★

XVI

DAYDREAM LIBRARY SERIES. CD/DL/LP

First full-length from Miami "Caribbean jazzgaze" quartet

To make music as unique as Seafoam Walls', singer-guitarist Jayan Bertrand recently explained, "You have to pull from a lot of different places". Indeed, *XVI* draws cannily from an eclectic guest list of influences, echoing the mystery of early Durutti Column, Thundercat's bruised melancholia, the home-made psychedelic soul of Shuggie Otis and the subterranean inventiveness of TV On The Radio, but emphatically avoiding any pigeonhole. The group's enchanting debut is a *sui generis* treat, rhythms shifting and metamorphosing at their inspired whim and languid, FX-masked guitar lines coiling like bejewelled tendrils as Bertrand crafts unlikely underground pop and hypnotic instrumentals. Alive with surprises, this music ensnares by stealth, the playful stop-start songcraft of You Can't Have Your Cake And Ego Too, the introspective slow-motion funk of You Always Said and joyful Tropicálian exeunt Rushed Rain brimming with subtle brilliance.

Stevie Chick

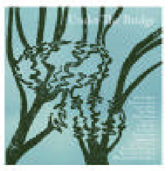
Various

★★★★

Under The Bridge

SKEP WAX. CD/DL/LP

A sparky compilation of new music from Sarah Records stalwarts.



In the 1990s Bristol-based Sarah Records released a succession of tracks that were reviled as winsome and twee by lad rock yet feted by fans of indie and dream pop. The post-punk sensitivity of those bands, though, has aged well, and many of the same musicians are still active, in different incarnations. In 2021 Amelia Fletcher and Rob Pursey (ex-Heavenly), formed Skep Wax to release fresh songs from Sarah label-mates, building on the fuzzy demo feel of that early era to create punchier sounds – whether it's the glacial effects and chiming guitar of The Luxembourg Signal (ex-LA band Aberdeen), the crunchy loops and loping beats of The Orchids, Boyracer's noise pop, or the arch comic menace of the Useless Users (ex-Secret Shine and Action Painting!). Fletcher and Pursey are here too, as dark, dreamy The Catenary Wires. This is a new mature indie scene in the making.

Lucy O'Brien

Wet Tuna

★★★

Warping All By Yourself

THREE LOBED. CD/DL/LP

Psych jamming duo get up with it.

Hardened survivors of freak folk, the New Weird America and various other iterations of underground psych, Matt Valentine and Pat 'PG Six' Gubler's ongoing Wet Tuna project is one of the most satisfying of their long careers. Since 2018 debut *Livin' The Die*, their records have got murkier and funkier, so that *Warping All By Yourself* very loosely suggests a Vermont backwoods take on Miles Davis and Teo Macero's '70s productions. Sweet Chump Change, with its promise of "unicorn blood, down the pub", is the breakout party jam; Ain't No Turnin' Back a benign summoning of Royal Trux's spirit. Deeper investigations are recommended, starting with last December's *Eau'd To A Fake Bookie Vol. 1 & 2*, and its spectacularly blitzed Jimmy Cliff and Grateful Dead covers.

John Mulvey

Heather Pollock

Confidence Man

★★★★

Tilt

HEAVENLY. CD/DL/LP

Brisbane house/disco unit's second plateful of irresistible bangers.

Since these Aussie electro-pop arrivistes launched with 2018's colourful *Confident Music For Confident People*, the world's dancefloors have been off limits. They resurface now, with a near-flawless follow-up that resonates on multiple levels, from universal party cravings through to playful, feminist messaging, and mass popularity feels highly probable. The sunny, unrestrainable charisma of rubber-limbed singer Janet Planet (*not* Van Morrison's original, brown-eyed girl) radiates from *Tilt*'s every groove, topping off her track-building backing band's expertly ornamented nods to OG rave, early-'90s piano house, Deee-Lite and The Chemical Brothers, with a lyrical zip which largely eluded even those hallowed antecedents. Whether down-and-dirty on self-confessed "J-Lo slut-jam" Toy Boy or injecting tongue-in-cheek wit into sex-positive belter Woman, Ms Planet could charm the most grooveless curmudgeon into a shimmy around the handbag. With enough disco detonators aboard for three Top 5 albums, here's the feel-good hit album of 2022.

Andrew Perry

Faust

★★★

„Daumenbruch"

EROTOTOX DECODINGS. CD/DL/LP

Post-Faust-schism, a new line-up gets back to basics.

True to their brief as Krautrock's agents of chaos, Faust existed in curious multiple forms when they reunited after their 1971-74 heyday, with one chapter being led by Werner 'Zappi' Diermaier and Jean-Hervé Péron, and another by Hans-Joachim Irmler. Now man-mountain drummer Zappi, who accuses his old collaborators of trying to "lead" Faust, has now founded a third formation with original keys/sax player Gunther Wüsthoff, plus members of Einstürzende Neubauten, Schneider TM and others. A certain cleanliness of sound apart, these three "meditative industrial" pieces draw from the same source as the earliest Faust experiments. With Zappi's distinctive rhythmic lob the guiding pulse to textured guitars, metallic percussion and other electronic manipulations, tension and release are sustained via often symphonic improvisations where riff, disintegration and what could be prehistoric armoured land mammals breaking wind meet. Naturally, there's no complaints department: the sleeve revisits the X-rayed fist of Faust's debut LP cover, this time extending its middle finger.

Ian Harrison

James Heather

★★★

Invisible Forces

AHEAD OF OUR TIME. DL/LP

More solo meditations from the London-based pianist.

While gifted young composer-performers such as Shida Shahabi have successfully surfed, and transcended, the post-Nils Frahm trend for keyboard introspection, too often contemporary piano records default to a procession of four-square arpeggios signifying not very much. According to accompanying notes, James Heather's *Invisible Forces* is contrastingly awash with meaning, its 11 intimate essays expressing everything from Zen-like connection with the universe to forgiveness for the lorry driver who knocked him off his bike and into a coma. Weighty subtexts and a consistent mood of restrained portent haven't entirely banished the aforementioned arpeggiated banality here, however, which is a shame, because in places – the title track's sudden angular chordal shifts, Meant To Be's rumbling left-hand melodrama, the Sakamoto-like flourishes of No Limit To Grief – Heather gives rein to an otherwise repressed idiosyncrasy, suggesting a more original and compelling voice waiting to be unleashed.

David Sheppard

Camille Blake

Confidence Man: detonating feel-good dancefloor grooves.

Kraftwerk

★★★★

Kraftwerk Remixes

PARLOPHONE. CD/DL/LP

Two-CD, 3-LP collection ahead of live dates this year.

It is hard to imagine that they once made lovely melodies on flute and recorder. Since the mid '70s, Kraftwerk have been determinedly all-electronic, with a keen ear to what was happening in clubland, nervously listening to new sounds and beats, ready with an update or patch to their sound when needed. With treatments by Hot Chip, Étienne de Crécy, William Orbit, François Kevorkian and Orbital, as well as in-house at Kling Klang, the focus here is on more recent *Produkt*, (there's a total of 11 remixes of just two tracks, 1999's Expo 2000 and 2003's Aéro Dynamik). Best is the chilling Radioactivity, the graceful La Forme and Non Stop, a 2020 reworking of a music clip made for MTV back in the day (itself based on their 1986 single, Musique Non Stop) and possessed of one of those lonely melodies only Kraftwerk can do.

David Buckley

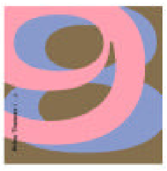
Prins Thomas

★★★★

8+9

PRINS THOMAS MUSIKK. CD/DL/LP

Kosmische dance head brings double the bliss.

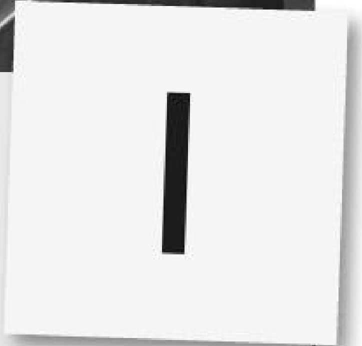


Space disco, cosmic house, call it what you will – for the best part of two decades, the Norwegian producer 'Prins' Thomas Hermansen has been making gently delirious instrumental music that often resembles an Ibizan take on motorik. Hermansen's most famous tunes came out in the early 2000s, in partnership with the slightly higher-profile Hans-Peter Lindstrøm, but as these two languid and gorgeous records (also available on one CD) prove, his solo vision has remained strong. Hence sundry evocations of Ashra (notably Cala Llonga), dappled acoustic guitars and discreet jazz fusion vibes, the odd track that wouldn't sound out of place on a late-'90s Air LP (Evig Ung) and, best of all, Cool Coronas, where Hermansen and Solange/Eddie Chacon associate John Carroll Kirby locate the sweet spot between Tangerine Dream and The Isleys.

John Mulvey

ELECTRONICA

BY STEPHEN WORTHY



Plastikman & Chilly Gonzales

★★★★

Consumed In Key

TURBO RECORDINGS. DL/LP

Minimal techno landmark gets haunting, jazz-flecked reboot.

In 1998, esteemed techno DJ Richie Hawtin released a Plastikman album that both altered how he himself was perceived and helped shift techno's image in broader terms. *Consumed* was visceral, seductive, minimal dance music. Hawtin's Canadian compatriot Chilly Gonzales first heard it on its 20th anniversary. The pianist found it both challenging and inspirational alike, making sense of it by composing his own accompaniment. After telling DJ and Turbo label head Tiga about his project, the latter worked on making it an official release. The result is *Consumed In Key*, with Hawtin on board, mixing Gonzales's contributions. Saturnine opener Contain now has a ghostly chill. Cor Ten was originally redolent of dub techno pioneers Basic Channel. Here, strings add menace – an alternative Godfather theme. And on the hypnagogic title track, Gonzales's repetitive phrasing creates a complementary, mesmeric loop of its own. More than just frivolous embellishments, *Consumed In Key* is a standalone work of art.

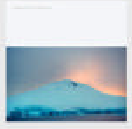
ALSO RELEASED

Whatever The Weather

★★★★

Whatever The Weather

GHOSTLY INTERNATIONAL. CD/DL/LP



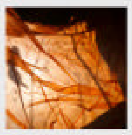
Whatever The Weather is the atmospheric, ambient-dipped alter ego of stellar north London producer Loraine James. Its tracks bloom or brood organically, changing tempo and energy in line with the temperatures they're named after. Thus 36°C shimmers languidly, while 0°C is an icy hailstorm of shifting beats. A meditative counterpoint to *Reflection*, James's MOJO Electronica Album Of The Year for 2021.

Interstellar Funk

★★★★

Into The Echo

DEKMANTEL. DL/LP



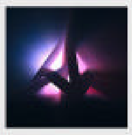
There's no faulting Interstellar Funk for a lack of ambition on his debut for elite Dutch label Dekmantel. Switching between squelching Kraftwerkian motorik and sun-burnished Balearica, spectral dub rave and fidgety, unsettling sound design, *Into The Echo* bristles with a paranoiac quality that seems to perfectly fit the times into which it was born.

Aasthma

★★★★

Arrival

MONKEYTOWN. DL/LP



Pär Grindvik and Peder Mannerfelt normally fashion uncompromising techno, but Aasthma finds them channelling their poppier side, like the true Swedes they are. There's Jarre-esque breakbeat (Arrival), highly polished Weeknd-style introspection (3am), but its apogee is Your Style: here, Jonnine Standish of Aussie lo-fi folksters HTRK provides wispy, sensuous vocals to accompany the twitchy, ominous storm swirling around him.

Bogdan Raczynski

★★★

ADDLE

PLANET MU. CD/DL/LP

In a career spanning almost three decades, marked by the patronage of one Richard D James, Bogdan Raczynski has frequently been in lockstep with the Aphexian aesthetic of jungle and techno-based rhythms with an eccentric slant. *ADDLE* is the Polish-American artist depressurising, lolling between deep bass boom and twinkling synth melodies, in a way that's alluringly melancholic. *SW*

STRANGE PLANET
TOM CARUANA

Tom Caruana

★★★★

Strange Planet

TEA SEA. CD/DL/LP/MC

Producer of 2010's Wu-Tang/Beatles mash-ups corrals rap talents (Mr Lif, Jehst, King Kashmere, Confucius MC, Prince Po) for a riveting set: interplanetary vibes (cavernous drums, jazzy keys, scratching) meet intergalactic musings at warp speed 9. *AC*

Vicky Farewell
Sweet Company

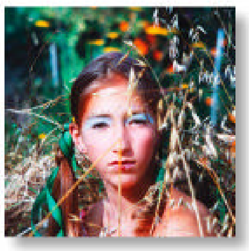
Vicky Farewell

★★★

Sweet Company

MAC'S RECORD LABEL. CD/DL/LP

Jazz and classical-schooled Californian applies her keyboard skills to dreamy, swing-beat pop. The Stevie Wonder-in-space production (clue: she's on Mac DeMarco's label) may be too sickly for some, but her concise pop instincts are undeniable. *JB*



Maia Friedman

★★★★

Under The New Light

LAST GANG. DL/LP

Wistful, ambient solo debut from Dirty Projectors/Coco member. An immersive weave of fluttering electronics, raindrop acoustic guitar and her resonant, emotion-laden voice unfolds, until a closing burst of synth-bopping energy titled Asleep In The Garden. *JB*

ALYSSA GENGOS

Alyssa Gengos

★★★

Mechanical Sweetness

EGG HUNT. DL/LP

Talented LA indie producer turns gimlet-eyed self-analysis into nostalgic pop. The best songs open a window to the world: Gothenburg English, a bittersweet travelogue with girl group roots; the glassy My Sweet Lord-ish reverberance of Health House. *JB*

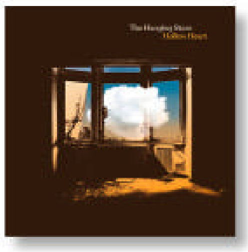
Guerilla Toss

★★★

Famously Alive

SUB POP. CD/DL/LP/MC

Upstate New Yorkers' latest embrace of dysfunction refocuses the dance-punk energy of their DFA tenure. Camp art-pop songs matching Kassie Carlson's surreal lyrics with burbling synths and booming basses, it might snag GT the audience they crave. *AC*



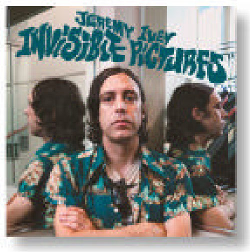
The Hanging Stars

★★★

Hollow Heart

LOOSE. CD/DL/LP

Made at Edwyn Collins' studio in NE Scotland yet on the same West Coast ley lines as Teenage Fanclub, shaggy Londoners channel classic '60s cosmic fare. Beatific Hollow Eyes, Hollow Heart glows with pedal steel and vibrant guitar. *JB*



Jeremy Ivey

★★★★

Invisible Pictures

ANTI-. CD/DL/LP

Already Nashville A-Team – Ivey is Margo Price's guitarist and husband – his own poetic, empathetic songs have a knack of turning modern ills (racism, drugs, poverty) into careworn country classicism: see Tom Petty-ish story-song Keep Me High. *JB*

Fergus McCreadie

★★★★

Forest Floor

EDITION. CD/DL/LP

McCreadie evokes seasonal change on this wildly roaming successor to 2021's *Cairn*. His pianos ripple over Stephen Henderson's insistent grooves and David Bowden's low-end. Al fresco jazz, its eddies and subtle sonorities recall EST. *AC*

RIDING THE LOW

Riding The Low

★★★

The Death Of Gobshite Rambo

CLINICAL FINISH. DL/LP

Thesp and GBV fan Paddy Considine has threatened to give up acting for rock'n'roll. His group's third LP is all-in, purging the tyranny of the divided self over impassioned Midlands roots rock, twang and gundown brass. *IH*

JAMAICA NACIONAL
SLY5THAVE
ROBERTO VERÁSTEGUI
Agua de Jamaica

Sly5thAve & Roberto Verástegui

★★★★

Agua De Jamaica

TRU THOUGHTS. CD/DL/LP

This sax/piano pairing is a passionate rag-bag; Tie Break's thick Hammonds and the title track's trippy tones bristle with organic warmth. Loose, vibey, soulful and a-buzz with life. *AC*

EXTENDED PLAY

We wear short shorts

Stretching the single format this month are **Joe Armon-Jones & Fatima**. Their Tinted Shades EP (Aquarii) features drummer Moses Boyd, whose acrylic beats add trip-hop edge to Fatima's smooth R&B vocal and JA-J's spacey electric piano on the title track. Young Brit pups **Dog Unit** debut with four long, guitar/bass/drums instrumentals mixed by Kieran Hebden on Turn Right And Right Again (Brace Yourself). Wired but mellow, like Jim O'Rourke's jazz-not-jazz work with Gastr Del Sol, they consistently hit invigorating, highly saturated grooves. Old dog: new tricks, as **Bob Mould** offers radical alternate perspectives on his hallmark amped rage with a three-track acoustic EP, The Ocean (Merge), recorded live in Mould's San Francisco studio for NPR. The title track and Forecast Of Rain were standouts on his 2020 album *Blue Hearts*, while the version of Hüsker Dü's Divide And Conquer proves that even an unplugged Mould turns the lights on. Guitar sorcery apprentice **Steve Gunn** releases a collaborative EP, Nakama, in which friends remix/rework tracks from 2021's *Other You*. Mdou Moctar's bassist and guitarist, Mikey Coltun and Ahmoudou Madassane, quicken the pulse of stand-out Protection.

Bob Mould: he thinks it's going to rain.

VANESSA WAGNER STUDY OF THE INVISIBLE

Vanessa Wagner

★★★★

Study Of The Invisible

INFINÉ. CD/DL/LP

Singular French musician adapts minimalist shorts by Suzanne Ciani, Harold Budd, Moondog and Philip Glass for solo piano. An elegant take on Roger and Brian Eno's Celeste typifies her gift for capturing intensity without slamming pedals or showers of notes. *AC*

ZOMBIE ZOMBIE
VAE VOBIS

Zombie Zombie

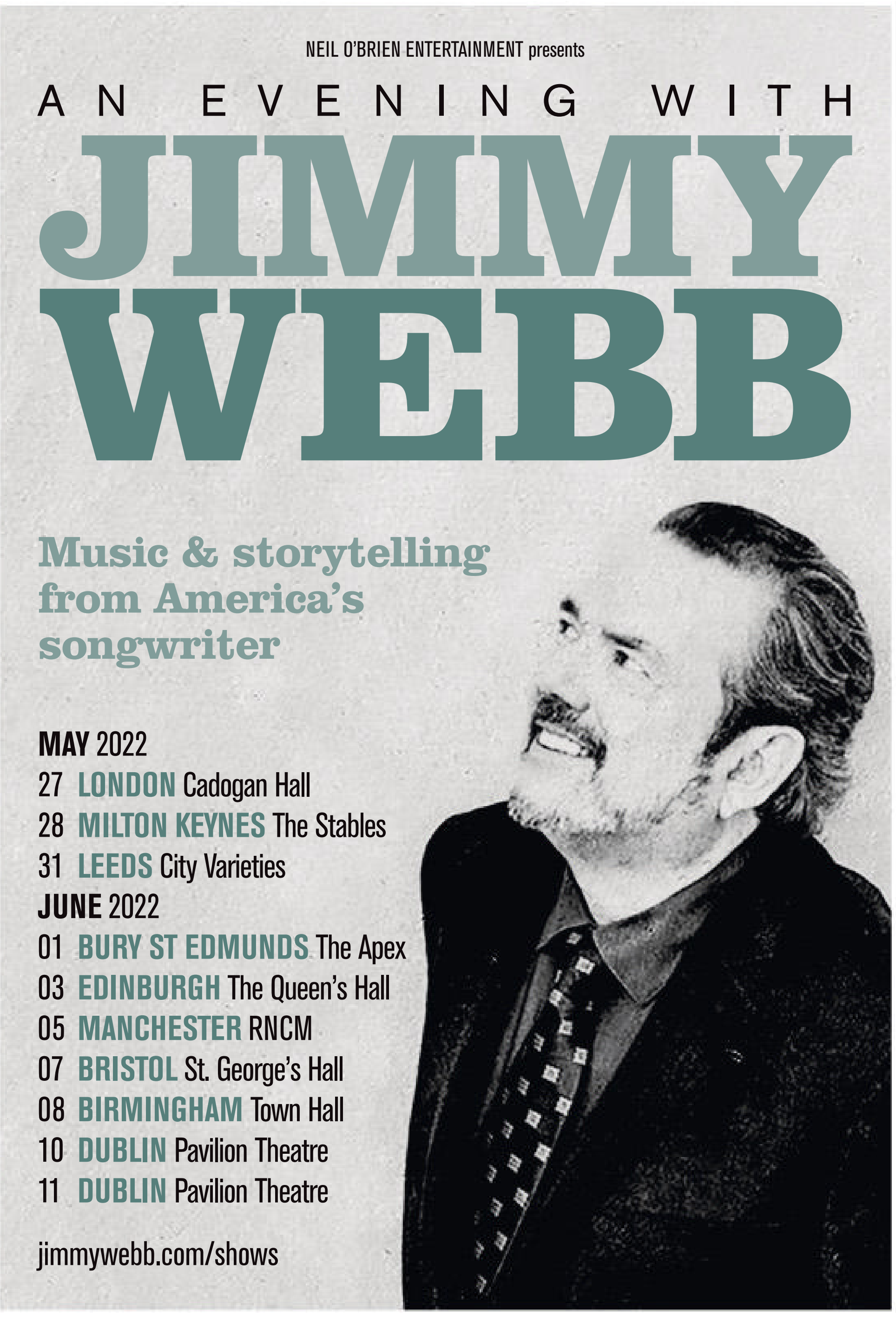
★★★

Vae Vobis

BORN BAD. DL/LP

French synth and drum trio's expansive, sci-fi inspired LP clangs and echoes like a pagan Laibach. Guest female sopranos sing mostly in Latin, through vocoders. If that sounds like so much horror prog whimsy, that's because it is. Brilliantly so. *JB*

James Richards



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MANCHESTER O2 VICTORIA WAREHOUSE

THU 24 NOV
CARDIFF MOTORPOINT ARENA

SOLD OUT & SUN 27 NOV
LONDON O2 ACADEMY BRIXTON

TUE 29 NOV
LEICESTER DE MONTFORT HALL

W SOLD OUT OV
LEEDS O2 ACADEMY

FRI 02 DEC
NEWCASTLE O2 CITY HALL

S SOLD OUT C
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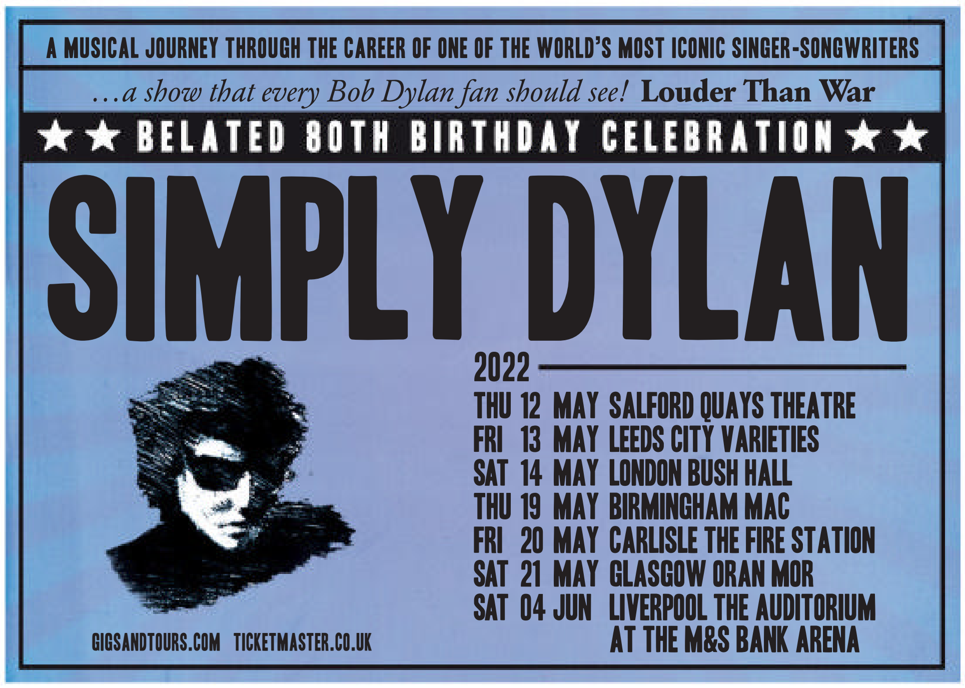

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WED 13 BIRMINGHAM O_2 INSTITUTE2
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THU 21 SHEFFIELD LEADMILL
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Remains of the day

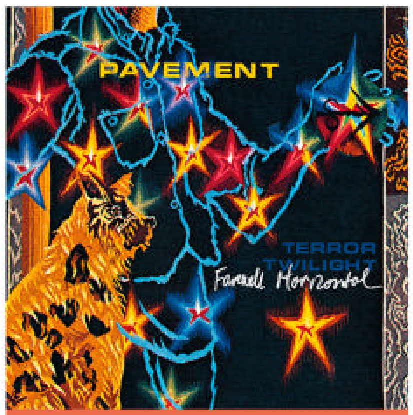
Bi-coastal lo-fi pioneers' troubled 1999 swan song, belatedly improved by the deluxe reissue treatment. By **Stevie Chick**.

Pavement

★★★★

Terror Twilight: Farewell Horizontal

MATADOR. CD/DL/LP



THAT *TERROR Twilight: Farewell Horizontal* arrives a full 14 years after the previous entry in Pavement's supposedly biennial reissues series is notable. The group's percussionist/Moog-wrangler/wildcard Bob Nastanovich tells MOJO the delay was principally due to a paucity of bonus material. But then he admits, "*Terror Twilight* was our most poorly received album." Helmed by Radiohead producer Nigel Godrich, the recording sessions took the group outside of their comfort zone. With an eye to making a Pavement album that might speak to a broader audience, Godrich expected these notoriously lackadaisical musicians to knuckle down and toil, as frontman Stephen Malkmus began to wonder if he'd outgrown his bandmates.

"This version plays to the album's 'trippy' strengths."

You can forgive their reluctance to revisit the experience, then. But, following a winter spent poring over The Beatles: Get Back and forensically divining the exact causes of the Fab Four's split, *Farewell Horizontal*'s frank linernotes and copious outtakes provoke similar sleuthy hypotheticals. Did the laborious recording process cause Pavement's dissolution? Or was Malkmus already drifting apart from his bandmates? And did the absence of any songs by guitarist/vocalist Scott 'Spiral Stairs' Kannberg signal Malkmus's desire to take control of the group, or a group dynamic in fatal free fall?

Work on *Terror Twilight* began in July 1998 with a fortnight at Jackpot! Recording Studios in Portland, Oregon. Lance Bangs' Pavement rockumentary Slow Century depicted the band drunkenly air-guitaring along to Dinosaur Jr's *You're Living All Over Me* in Portland, but this bonhomie was short lived. Malkmus arrived with demos of new songs, backed by guitar and weird antique synth, but soon discovered he was the only member with new songs.

BACK STORY: COMPLETE CONTROL

● Bob Nastanovich pushes back at the suggestion that Nigel Godrich (above) was installed as producer at the behest of anyone outside the group. "Our biggest concern was always having complete control of how we sounded," he says. "We'd heard horror stories about outside forces having influence over how you sounded. We were willing to take on suggestions, but nobody was calling the shots but us. I don't know if it cost us in the end, but we never did anything that we were uncomfortable with. Lollapalooza in 1995 was probably the only time we did." [See MOJO 199]

Getty, Marcus Roth

"*Terror Twilight* was the most 'start from scratch' album Pavement made," explains Nastanovich to MOJO. "We didn't live anywhere near each other, so there was no organic communal song-writing going on. And that was the most frustrating aspect of Pavement for Stephen: to be in a band with four people who, when the party was over and everybody went home, pretty much forgot about Pavement. He was the only one doing the homework."

The sessions at Jackpot! went nowhere. On their final day in Portland, the group decamped to the home of a friend, Rex Ritter of post-rockers Jessamine, where Malkmus taught the band a song of his "so easy all of you should be able to play it". The opening couplet of Ann Don't Cry feels like a message from songwriter to bandmates: "The damage has been done/I am not having fun any more."

Amid these strained vibes materialised Godrich. A fan, he nevertheless believed Pavement "too left-field for some people". His mission to fine-tune their chaos began at Sonic Youth's Echo Canyon studio, a rustic spot within the shadow of the World Trade Centre, where the sound of Wall Street bankers jamming with their hobby bands next door bled through. At Godrich's insistence, Pavement relocated to RPM, a plusher studio nearby, cutting the LP there over 10 expensive days, before adding finishing touches (including some gutbucket harmonica from Radiohead's Jonny Greenwood on Platform Blues and Billie) at RAK studios in London.

Godrich's approach was radically different from the easy-going producers Pavement had previously worked with – Mitch Easter, Bryce Goggin and Doug Easley – who, Nastanovich says, "invited you into their place and made you comfortable so you could make the best record possible." Godrich, by contrast, worked them hard, demanding numerous retakes (Malkmus and Kannberg both complained of blisters on their fingers), overdubbing to correct mistakes, and even getting Malkmus and The High Llamas' Dominic Murcott to re-record Steve West's imperfect drum parts. Godrich himself remarks in the sleevenotes that when he listens to *Terror Twilight* now, "I can hear all the work we did with Stephen's vocals, to make him sound less like he didn't give a shit".

Such perfectionism was profoundly counter to the oblique, apathetic glory that had been Pavement's trademark. But Malkmus was ambitious, ready to shake up his paradigm. His tastes had shifted from post-punk clatter to prog-folk complexity; his blueprint for *Terror Twilight* imagined four mellow songs, four classic Pavement-style "pop" songs, and "four hard-rock tunes, like The Groundhogs and Captain Beefheart". This latter flavour is where *Terror Twilight* shines brightest: the mangled crossfire-hurricanes of Platform Blues, the tectonic shifts of Cream Of Gold, the giddy din of Billie and the doomy The Hexx all offering their own idiosyncratic twists on big rock moves.

Godrich's original tracklisting for the album (at the time vetoed by Kannberg, but reinstated here) foregrounds these heavier tracks, pushing singles Major Leagues, Spit On A Stranger and Carrot Rope – neither-fish-nor-fowl attempts to find middle ground between old and new-school Pavement – to the second half. This version plays to what Malkmus saw as the album's "psychedelic, trippy" strengths. But, undeniable highlights aside and occasional longueurs considered, it doesn't mask the fact that *Terror Twilight* still doesn't quite work.

Godrich isn't the villain here. Neither is Malkmus. Nor are the rest of Pavement, playing to the very limits of their skills, and happening upon occasional moments of brilliance (a deep dive of the box set's bonuses turns up further treasures like the knowing Cheap Trick vamp of Be The Hook, a gnarly live cover of Creedence's Sinister Purpose, and the gleeful indie rock throwback of Stub Your Toe, which pairs Kannberg with maverick ex-Pavement drummer Gary Young). If *Terror Twilight* doesn't hang together as a whole, it's because Pavement were themselves growing apart, puzzle pieces that no longer fitted together. You can sense Malkmus gazing off at a future without these musicians, and you can hear the absence of a certain spark, a crucial fraternal bonhomie smothered. But still, it's hard to disagree with Bob Nastanovich's final verdict. "We quit while we were ahead," he tells MOJO. "Or at least before we really became shit."

BOB SPEAKS! NASTANOVICH ON BEING DISSED, FEELING EXHAUSTED AND LOVING REUNIONS.

The *Twilight* zone: Pavement (from left) Scott Kannberg, Bob Nastanovich, Stephen Malkmus, Mark Ibold, Steve West – still smiling (just) in 1998.

No fear: Pavement's Stephen Malkmus (left) and Bob Nastanovich.

"Nigel didn't know my name..."

Bob Nastanovich speaks to Stevie Chick.

You said that *Terror Twilight* is Pavement's most "poorly received" album...

"We were extremely spoiled when it came to reviews – if anything, we'd always been overrated. *Terror Twilight* was the record where people decided, 'It's OK to dis Pavement now'. But part of the reason we're doing this now is that fans have been clamouring for this reissue for the last decade. I really like these songs, they've stood the test of time."

Stephen Malkmus shouldered almost all of the song-writing responsibilities on the album – did that cause tension?

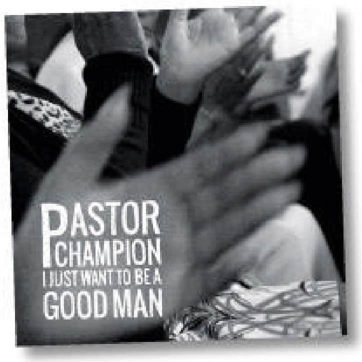
"*Terror Twilight* was basically just Stephen. He was not aggressively critical about it, but he did say that it was hard being in a band with people who had stopped listening to music and new things. For us to expect him to carry us and, in some cases, even teach us our own parts, became a growing source of frustration for him. I feel *Terror Twilight* was maybe the first Stephen Malkmus album."

You mention in the sleevenotes that Nigel Godrich focused on Malkmus, to the expense of the rest of the band.

"A few days into the recording, I was pretty sure Nigel didn't know my name. And then I was able to find a nuance in a conversation where I proved he didn't know my name (*laughs*). But he was a fan of the band and he wanted to make a Pavement record. I think we were probably difficult to work with, especially at that time. I saw him that summer, and he apologised to me. I'd told that story in the press about how he didn't know my name, and he felt really bad about that. I said, 'You did a great job on the record. You record a band, that doesn't mean you have to become mates with the people.'"

Did you know the end was coming?

"We had a basic game plan for a sixth Pavement album. We were practising new songs – at least three or four songs of what became [Malkmus's 2001 solo debut] *Stephen Malkmus*, would have been on the sixth Pavement record. But as touring for *Terror Twilight* went on, it became more and more laborious for Stephen. He wanted to experience being in a band that rehearsed and created and jammed together on a regular basis, just like 99 per cent of the other bands in the world. On the final week of the tour, he told me he couldn't keep being in a band like this any more. He thought it'd be more healthy for him as an artist to try something different. And I was so exhausted, so unwell after weeks of touring, so fried, I was perfectly fine with that. I was amazed I got to be a part of it in the first place. And I was amazed when he told me in 2009, 'We're gonna do a Pavement reunion tour next year.' I'd assumed in 1999 that we'd never play again. And then I assumed, after the seven or so concerts we did in 2010, that we'd never play again. But there you go. It goes without saying that I'm the last person he'd ever have to ask if they'd want to play again, because I love it so much."



Pastor Champion

★★★★

I Just Want To Be A Good Man

LUAKA BOP. CD/DL/LP

Raw gospel from the little known Louisiana born preacher man, who died in December 2021.

Pastor Champion was a touring preacher and carpenter. He was also the brother of soul singer Bettye Swann. With his electric guitar and bible, he travelled the West Coast singing hymns of struggle and devotion and this sole album, recorded live over two days on two-track in 2018, captures his spirited sermonising. Luaka Bop, who discovered him on the YouTube channel of the 37th Street Baptist Church in Oakland, California, had intended to add extra tracks to the LP before release, but Champion wanted none of it and got his way – a good thing, as the sparseness lends a quiet power and intimacy to proceedings, especially on the title missive, where Champion, with fire in his bones, is on his knees and laid bare.

Lois Wilson

The Pentangle

★★★

Pentangling

RENAISSANCE. LP

Folk jazzers' contemporary compilation back on vinyl in new sleeve.

Originally released by Transatlantic in 1973 as a mid-priced compilation, with an amusing pentagonal album as the cover artwork, this is a decent introduction to that fine band formed at the crossroads between folk rock and jazz. It's divided into one side of band compositions and one side of trad arr material, taking a couple of tracks from each of their Transatlantic albums (except *Cruel Sister*), and not including their hit Light Flight. An excellent remaster, housed in a heavy card gatefold with tip-on artwork. Unfortunately, said artwork features a low-wattage on-stage photograph, fussy typography and the largest barcode I've ever seen, though the gatefold's spread of photographs is nice. A similarly heavy-handed addition of modern information also lets down an otherwise very welcome reissue of the US Reprise edition of (The) Pentangle's 1968 debut from the same label. If you're doing a luxury facsimile it's best to keep your own branding discreet, surely?

Jim Irvin

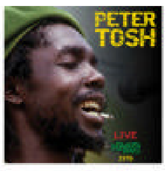
Peter Tosh

★★★★

Live At My Father's Place

ROCKBEAT. CD/DL/LP

Peak-period 1978 live set with full-spectrum audio.



After signing to Rolling Stones Records for the *Bush Doctor* album, Peter Tosh hit the States with his Word, Sound And Power band as support act on the *Some Girls* tour, headlining Long Island reggae haunt My Father's Place during a stopgap. Recorded for broadcast by local FM station WLIR, this concert album has pristine audio, highlighting the expressive power of Tosh's baritone, Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare's unbeatable rhythm section, and guitar pyrotechnics from bandleader Mikey Chung. Beginning with expanded takes of 400 Years and Stepping Razor, Tosh comes into his own on a playfully delivered African and the dejected Pick Myself Up, both embellished by keyboard flourishes from Robbie Lyn a nd Keith Sterling. The cheeky rendition of Don't Look Back, meanwhile, with its dribbling snare, provides some light relief before the rousing, militant climaxes of Get Up Stand Up and Legalize It.

David Katz.

The Winstons

★★★★

Color Him Father

SOUL JAZZ. DL/LP

1969 samplers' delight originally issued on Len Levy's Metromedia Records.

The Winstons were a soul and funk outfit from Washington DC with a line-up comprising members from Otis Redding and Curtis Mayfield's backing bands. Their one album, 1969's excellent Don Carroll-produced *Color Him Father*, has become a holy grail for its inclusion of their hurriedly put together B-side, Amen, Brother, an instrumental cut loosely based on the gospel number. Its six-second drum solo – the "Amen break" – played by GC Coleman, is reportedly the most sampled piece of music ever, used in over 1500 songs. Yet the album itself deserves celebration too: its title track, which earned a Grammy for best R&B song, written by tenor saxophonist/singer Richard Spencer, is imbued with a spiritual richness. Elsewhere, covers of Everyday People and Only The Strong Survive are impressive too.

Lois Wilson

Tinariwen

★★★★

The Radio Tisdas Sessions

WEDGE. CD/DL/LP

Twentieth anniversary remaster for the Tuareg ensemble's major debut.

Recorded in the titular Malian broadcaster's solar-powered but rickety studio in 2001 – by which time Tinariwen were already veteran purveyors of short-run cassette albums and staples of the desert festival circuit – this, the peripatetic ensemble's debut international release, would alert a global audience to their signature *tishoumaren* sound, a heady amalgam of West and North African musics leavened with electric blues and rock. Post-production, courtesy of Peter Gabriel's Real World, lends a modicum of sheen to the visceral Radio Tisdas recordings, with shimmering, narcotic grooves and massed incantations like Le Chant Des Fauves and Imidiwaren punctuated by silvery flashes of Ry Cooder-like guitar from founder Abdallah Ag Alhousseyni. Elsewhere, the sparer Tessalit suggests an acoustic John Lee Hooker wafted by a Saharan sirocco, while Tin-Essako, recorded live at the Festival Au Desert, affords an enticing glimpse of the band's on-stage potency. This new edition adds the unreleased Ham Tinahghin Ane Yallah (2004's follow-up *Amassakoul* is also reissued).

David Sheppard

Pastor Champion: fire in his bones.

Adam Wissing,, Rahav Segev

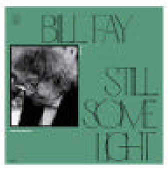
Bill Fay

★★★★

Still Some Light Part 2

DEAD OCEANS. DL/LP

The veteran English singer-songwriter's 2009 demo recordings debut on vinyl.



Originally released on CD, Bill Fay's *Still Some Light* exhumed a set of early-'70s works-in-progress (some redrafted for his 1971 *Time Of The Last Persecution* opus), complemented by then-new home recordings. Dead Oceans reissued *Part 1* in January, with this follow-up reprising the homespun 2009 *oeuvre*. Aside from wintry opener My Eyes Open, on which Fay's heartbreakingly fragile vocal is laid over a sonorous, unrelated Michael Cashmore chamber piece, the songs were captured on basic digital equipment, and while standouts like the aching, Dylanesque There Is A Valley and numinous Be At Peace With Yourself would be more fully realised on 2014's *Life Is People* album, the spiritual vulnerability and despite-it-all transcendence that hallmarks Fay's songwriting is no less compelling on these thumbnail versions. Indeed, the keyboard washes and stiffly programmed drums seem only to lend his desolate, all-too-human delivery further poignancy.

David Sheppard

Tindersticks

★★★★

Past Imperfect: The Best Of Tindersticks '92-21

CITY SLANG. CD/DL/LP

Imperfect perhaps but exceptional, nonetheless.

Tindersticks are most closely associated with bruised balladry redolent of Nick Cave and orchestrated existential musings, delivered in Stewart Staples' characteristic chewy, nasal tones. Their 1993 single City Sickness exemplifies this approach, but *Past Imperfect…* encompasses a wide range of styles, including the lengthy, disquieting recitation My Sister. Standard rock instrumentation is augmented by strings, brass, vibes, even bowed saw, but it's all deftly arranged and never cluttered. The songs tap deep wells of emotion. On Can We Start Again?, Staples sings a touching duet with Gina Foster over a Motown-style rhythm with handclaps and on the sombre Travelling Light, he is running away from his love, riddled with guilt, with Carla Torgerson's gentle chiding adding to the heart-breaking drama. Disappointingly, there's nothing from 2021's *Distractions* with its austere loops and electronics, but we get a new, lean piano ballad, Both Sides Of The Blade.

Mike Barnes

Love Tractor

★★★★

Themes From Venus

PROPELLER SOUND. CD/DL/LP

"Should have put Love Tractor in the big time," reckons fellow Athens, GA scenester Peter Buck.

Love Tractor preceded R.E.M. in Athens' indie rock timeline – drummer Bill Berry left the former for the latter – but also tapped that Byrdsian motherlode while establishing a parallel instrumental identity, Raybeats meets Ventures. By the late '80s, R.E.M. and Athens' other superpower The B-52's were doing their utmost to talk up their friends, and 1988's Mitch Easter-produced fourth album *Themes From Venus* responded with a pop makeover: more B-52's than R.E.M., not least the bouncing title track's Day-Glo keys and sax. Satan's New Wave Soul Losers has something of Pixies' liberated Here Comes Your Man; instrumentals such as Nova Express are equally playful. Not only did the album fail to chart, they didn't release another until 2001. Six remodelled bonuses complete this remastered/expanded edition.

Martin Aston

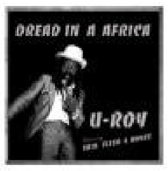
U-Roy

★★★★

Dread In A Africa

JAMAICAN ART. LP

Lost mid-1970s album, with two bonus tracks.



In 1975, Jamaican record producer Alvin Ranglin was in London on business when thieves burned down his record shop in Kingston, destroying several master tapes in a storeroom, including an unfinished U-Roy LP titled *Dread In A Africa*; since half of the songs remained intact, Ranglin asked Carlton Lee at Dynamics to mix some companion dubs for the B-side, but test pressings generated little interest. Thankfully, Jamaican Art Records have unearthed the original master tapes for this 180-gram gatefold release, which reveals the Deejay Daddy in fine form, tackling Gregory Isaacs' Love Is Overdue as Children Of Jah, and the Maytones' Madness as Dread In A Earth. Elsewhere, the risqué Nana Banana sounds equally great in its reverberating dub form, and bonus motorcycle epic 354 rides Barbara Jones's reggae take of country standard Walk Through This World.

David Katz.

Home and away: Branko Mataja hears ghosts in his machines.

World Of Echo

Ultra-rare recordings from a Croatian-American folk guitarist who unites the sounds of east and west. By Andrew Male.

Branko Mataja

★★★★

Over Fields And Mountains

NUMERO GROUP. DL/LP

FROM THE opening track, an instrumental re-imagining of Serbian ballad Da Smo Se Ranije Sreli (Yes We Have Met Before) you know you're in the presence of a unique and strange talent. The roots are Eastern European folk, certainly, but this is music that emerges rather than begins. Materialising from a mist of reverb, Mataja's eerie guitar glistens with a melancholy delay, as a low rumble, possibly from a Leslie speaker, resembles the solemn humming of a distant choir. There are suggestions of Joe Meek's New World and Pops Staples' tremolo ghosts, but also Spacemen 3's E-chord ecstasy and The Ventures' electric country twang. It sounds simultaneously ancient and futuristic, familiar yet unique. It's a miracle that it is even here.

Born in Dalmatia, now Croatia, in 1923, but raised in Belgrade, Branko Mataja built his first guitar at age 10. After spending the Second World War in a German labour camp, he moved to a Displaced Persons camp in North Yorkshire before emigrating to Canada, then Detroit, then Las Vegas, before settling in North Hollywood in 1964 where he worked as a guitar repairer. At some point in the early '70s Mataja recorded for John Filcich's Festival Records, a store and distributor dedicated to Eastern European folk music. Jump forward to 2005 and LA musician David Jerkovich is exploring the Yugoslavian music in Counterpoint Records & Books in East Hollywood when he picks up *Traditional And Folk Songs Of Yugoslavia* by Branko Mataja. Now, after over a decade of negotiation with Mataja's family, here it is, complete with tracks from its cassette-only mid-'80s follow-up, *Folk Songs Of Serbia*.

According to his son Bata, Branko's unique guitar sound was down to DIY experimentation incorporating tape delay and attempts to emulate traditional folk instruments – flutes, lutes, etc – with his guitar. But also "a guitar action as low as humanly possible, to incorporate one-handed hammering". The result, on tracks such as Kad Ja Podoh Na Bembasu (When I Went To Bembasa) and Zapletnicki Cacak (Caught Up In Cacakis) is akin to hearing Eddie Van Halen shredding Anton Karas' Third Man score.

The album was released in 1973, on local vanity label Essar Records, available for $6.50, postage included. However, Branko, who died in 2000, made his real living fixing guitars belonging to the likes of Johnny Cash and Geddy Lee. He never went back to Yugoslavia, and later proudly discovered that his mother had been born in America. And at times, Branko transforms these Eastern instrumentals into the country & western electric wail of Luther Perkins, or Alessandro Alessandroni's tense spaghetti western dramas.

It is the sound of assimilation, yet beneath it all remains that low rumble of ache and regret, that spinning Leslie speaker like a high wind from the Dalmatian mountains, or the massed wail of a thousand ghosts.

Organ accumulator: the multi-faceted jazz handed skills of Brian Auger (clockwise from left) early days at the old joanna; with The Trinity; with Steampacket (from left) Rod Stewart, Long John Baldry, Julie Driscoll and Auger.

FILE UNDER...

Preacher, leader, sidewinder

The varied career of a British soul-jazz one-off finds a new home. By **Jim Irvin.**

INVARIABLY SEATED behind a keyboard, Brian Auger, 83, has carved out a unique musical route for himself since the early 1960s: starting out as a jazz pianist, switching to Hammond (Brian Organ!) and R&B, forming Steampacket with Long John Baldry and Rod Stewart, briefly becoming a pop star in 1969 – his distinctive feral Peter Pan look stayed in the mind – with his band The Trinity and the equally striking Julie Driscoll, making a couple of broadly progressive albums under that banner, then living in a 'jazz commune' in Prague before spending much of the 1970s and '80s heading up Oblivion Express, a funky fusion troupe he steered from the United States. Taking sojourns in hard rock and acid jazz in subsequent decades, he has survived mainly in the niches between genres, always following his own lead, and has been described as, "Absolutely one of your favourite musician's favourite musicians."

Now, Soul Bank Music has acquired the rights to this one-off's extensive catalogue. Says founder Greg Boraman: "This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to fully reissue everything Brian has released, and also finally unleash the vast number of musical gems from [his] archive that have never been heard before. It's a goldmine of sounds from a 60-year career."

The first release is *Auger Incorporated*, a career-spanning digital taster compilation, featuring early unreleased tune The Preacher, his 1968 collaboration with Sonny Boy Williamson (the track Walkin' featuring Joe Harriott and Jimmy Page), tracks from the abandoned Steampacket album (including a bracing cover of Lee Morgan's The Sidewinder), Auger's hits with Driscoll and The Trinity, plus a previously unreleased tune, Jeanine, and prime moments from Oblivion Express, including some nice live rarities that set up the re-release later this year of the two-volume *Live Oblivion*, a sprawling banquet of soul-jazz jewels including covers of Inner City Blues and Compared To What.

It was their sultry blending of soul and rock with the freedom of jazz that set The Trinity apart at the end of the '60s. While acts like Cream launched out of the blues, Auger set sail with a view to a more varied, more Mod direction. Thus, Trinity cut songs by Dylan – their chart hit Wheels On Fire plucked from the then unreleased *Basement Tapes* – Richie Havens (his heady Indian Rope Man), and a rousing tilt at Sly Stone's I Wanna Take You Higher on their *Befour* album. All of these tracks are in *Auger Incorporated* and sound great. In fact, some of these masters improve upon the contemporary cuts. There were several Brian/Julie/Trinity compilations knocking about in the '70s – the only way to find their material after the short-lived Marmalade label shut down – some of which were cut rather murkily or at low volume.

> "A sultry blend of soul and rock with the freedom of jazz."

Hopefully, some of the Marmalade stuff, like The Trinity's groovy *Definitely What!* from 1968, will be coming up. Their collaboration with Sonny Boy Williamson, *Don't Send Me No Flowers*, also from 1968, is among the early titles reissued digitally. Coming over the next few months are Brian's solo works *Search Party* (1981), *Here And Now* (1984), two '90s Oblivion Express albums, *Keys To The Heart* and *Voices Of Other Times* and *Looking In The Eye Of The World* (2006) produced by Brian's son, Karma.

Later this year come a brace of box sets, one of the Driscoll/Trinity recordings and one dedicated to Oblivion Express, of whom the Beastie Boys once said: "Those who remain oblivious to the obvious delights of Brian Auger's Oblivion Express do so at their own risk!" Hear hear!

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WHEN RIVERS MEET

Soul deep: can Dusty get a witness?

dusty
sings
soul

Dusty Springfield

★★★★★

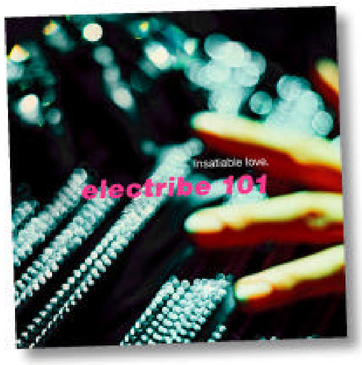
Dusty Sings Soul

KENT. CD/DL

Dusty sings Aretha, Marvin, Carla et al.

This is Dusty lost in the moment singing her favourite soul songs. She sourced many of them herself from frequent visits to New York's Colony Records and Dave Godin's Soul City in Deptford. And when she sang them, she imbued each with an emotional intimacy. They became her life story to tell, her joy, her pain. That this collection spanning 1963 to '69 contains just 24 tracks is its only flaw – it could easily have stretched to a box set. But still, from her opening reading of Marvin Gaye's Can I Get A Witness, an energetic and totally thrilling Mod dancer, to desperate but dignified closer What's It Gonna Be, penned by Ragovoy and Shuman and featuring Ashford and Simpson on backing, this is peak Dusty. And an exception to the rule that the originals aren't always the greatest.

Lois Wilson



Electribe 101

★★★

Electribal Soul

ELECTRIBAL. CD/DL/LP

Billie Ray Martin-fronted electronic quintet's second LP surfaces after 31 years in the wilderness.

Despite charts hits, a global tour supporting Depeche Mode, and remixes by house legends Frankie Knuckles and Marshall Jefferson, Electribe 101's fractious relationship with manager Tom Watkins, still smarting at Pet Shop Boys' defection, stopped *Electribal Soul* in its tracks. Essentially a continuation of 1990's comedown debut *Electribal Memories*, pitched at the shady nexus where '60s soul and Kraftwerk collide, Hamburg soul siren Billie Ray Martin's distinctive quivering timbre dominates A Sigh Won't Do and Deadline For My Memories, exquisitely bruised tales of loss and regret. While Martin has mined other highlights since – Throbbing Gristle cover Persuasion (with house duo Spooky in 1993), the snazzy soul of Moving Downtown (as Running Around Town on 1996's solo debut) – these lambent pop-house first takes, brimming with subtlety and soul, cut deepest.

Andy Cowan

Keith Richards

★★★★

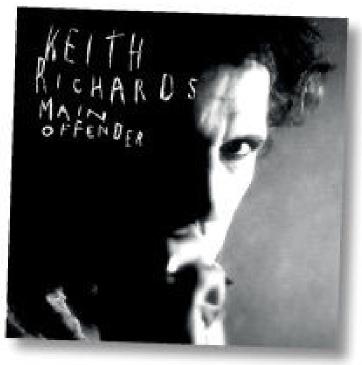
Main Offender – Deluxe Edition

BMG. CD/DL/LP

Rolling Stone's second solo album, now turbo-charged.

Keith Richards kept busy after the Stones' Steel Wheels/Urban Jungle tour. The result, 1992's *Main Offender*, gets a 30th anniversary remaster, with an additional live album and glossy book of photos and lyrics. Though missing some of '88 predecessor *Talk Is Cheap*'s vim and bluster, there's still gold here: in 999 and Wicked As It Seems' lower-than-low slung riffs and Yap Yap's sunny talking blues. Meanwhile, Steve Jordan's metronomic drumming steadies the ship, even on clunky '80s hangover Body Talk, and demonstrates why he was a shoo-in for the job after Charlie Watts's death. The bonus *Winos Live In London '92* is a sometimes amusing antidote to The Rolling Stones' stadium slickness. Richards' voice is, at best, unpredictable, but a surprisingly malevolent-sounding Gimme Shelter suggests a biblical plague of locusts descending on London's Town And Country Club.

Mark Blake



The James Hunter Six

★★★★

With Love

DAPTONE. DL/LP

Colchester's greatest soul star sings the ballads.

This isn't an album of new material from the Essex singer, guitarist. Instead, it's a best of the beat ballads he's recorded with Gabe Roth for Daptone, its 12 tracks selected from 2013's *Minute By Minute*, 2016's *Hold On!*, 2018's *Whatever It Takes* and 2020's *Nick Of Time*. The period cover artwork – an open silver heart-shaped locket bearing Hunter's photo – may put some off, but the songs are unquestionably authentic. Hunter, attracted to the big soul voices, was born to sing the slow-and-moodies, that resonant, liquid baritone of his perfect for Sam Cooke sophisticated crooning and Lou Johnson deep wallowing borne out on the enchanting It Was Gonna Be You, the touching Never and the more lively I Don't Wanna Be Without You.

Lois Wilson

حميد الشاعري
THE SLAM! YEARS (1983-1988)

Hamid Al Shaeri

★★★

The Slam! Years (1983-1988)

HABIBI FUNK. CD/DL/LP

The cream of five pioneering Arabic synth-pop albums.

Benghazi-born Al Shaeri developed a jones for musical technology while living in London at the start of the 1980s. It was a habit that bore fruit in the subsequent decade, when he would become one of the biggest names in Arabic pop. Focusing on the five cassettes recorded for Hany Sabet's Slam! label, this compilation may not be what fans of Habibi Funk's rootsier selections have come to expect, but its 10 tracks would have sounded great on a 1980s' car stereo (there's not a lot of bottom end). They straddle a world that is part cocktail bar, part souk: electro pop with Arabic rhythms and flutes that would have pleased home crowds. To these ears, though, Al Shaeri's voice is thin and undistinguished – sensuous, perhaps, but you could probably cut and paste vocal lines from any song onto any other.

David Hutcheon

Harold Budd

★★★★

The Pavilion Of Dreams

SUPERIOR VIADUCT. CD/DL/LP

The late minimalist/ambient composer called this 1978 album his Magna Carta.

In 1972, when Harold Budd composed Madrigals Of The Rose Angel, the piece that caught the attention of Brian Eno, the then 34-year-old Californian composer was trying to escape the theoretical traps of the avant-garde and create something of surface beauty and emotional power. Such is the case with Budd's first album for Eno's Obscure label, which rejects abstract inspirations such as Mark Rothko and Robert Rauschenberg and instead references the romantic art of the Pre-Raphaelites. Created with British composers and multi-instrumentalists Gavin Bryars and Michael Nyman, the album is an exercise in sublime surface textures and ethereal patterns, utilising light motifs of harp, keyboards, celeste and glockenspiel alongside the hovering saxophonist Marion Brown and the soaring mezzo-soprano of Lynda Richardson. Not designed as an album of depth or weight, it is, however, intricate and beguiling, both accessible and unknowable.

Andrew Male

HAROLD BUDD
THE PAVILION OF DREAMS

Tom Rapp

★★★★

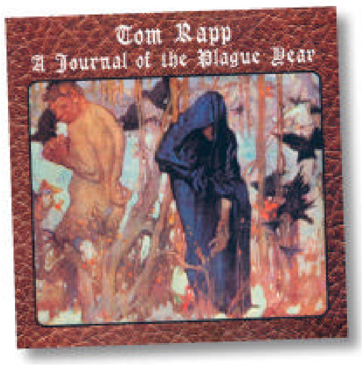
A Journal Of The Plague Year

BLUE MATTER. LP

Final solo album by Pearls Before Swine mainstay, with Damon & Naomi supplying additional textures.

Originally put out on CD by Nick Saloman's Woronzow label in 1999, Rapp's captivating swan song makes an auspicious debut release for the South Coast psychedelic sage's new vinyl-only imprint, Blue Matter. Although Rapp sadly died in 2018, the intervening decades have only enhanced this album's prophetic resonance – it's a great Covid lockdown record, made 20 years before the fact. The wistful elegiac mood belies an edge of counter-cultural steel, and from the exquisitely delicate opening a cappella WB Yeats poem to the gloriously frazzled three-part finale, Shoebox Symphony, the coherence of the whole has been greatly enhanced by the excision of a goofy closing interview excerpt which was the original album's only mis-step.

Ben Thompson



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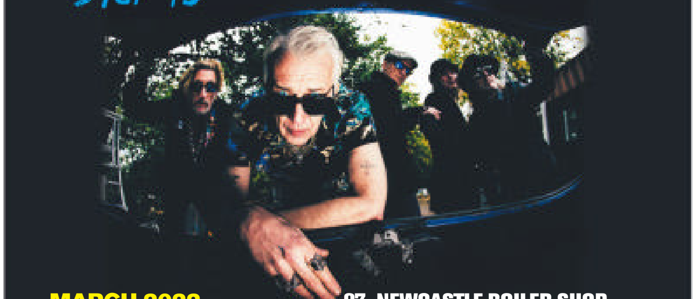

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FILTER REISSUES

John McLaughlin

★★★

The Montreux Years

BMG. CD/DL/LP

Live performances from the Swiss jazz festival compiled by the guitarist.

Radio Activity from 1984 features the final version of the Mahavishnu Orchestra, its speedy syncopated groove punctuated with garish keyboard and horn stabs. Then McLaughlin solos ecstatically, combining a stratospheric technique with the manic over-the-topness of a metal guitarist, and showing the door to his legions of imitators. At the time, he was experimenting with new-fangled guitar synth technology but on Nostalgia its dribbly sound blunts the attack that makes his guitar playing so extraordinary – though saxophonist Bill Evans puts in an impressive shift. McLaughlin takes a different approach with The Free Spirits on Sing Me Softly Of The Blues, from 1995, which gearshifts between a bluesy lope and jazzy walking basslines. The spontaneous applause at his jaw-dropping solo is well deserved. The two lengthy acoustic duets with Paco De Lucia from 1987 offer little light relief as both are delivered with mind-boggling speed and dexterity.

Mike Barnes

Various

★★★★

Jon Savage's 1977-1979: Symbols Clashing Everywhere

ACE. CD

England's Dreaming sage provides a fresh perspective on pop's watershed era.

"No more dreams of mystery chords," sang The Damned on Neat Neat Neat, an early starter on this 46-track miscellany of leaving-the-past-behind innovation. Not everyone ditched those fancy skills, but such was punk's impact that by decade's end, virtually no genre of music was left untouched. Even hard rock had a NWOBHM make-over. There was no Iron Maiden on the then Sounds/Melody Maker journalist's playlist back then, but there's plenty here from beyond that route-one leap from first generation punk (Subway Sect, Siouxsie/Banshees) to Savage-coined 'New Musick' makers (The Pop Group, The Normal, Cabaret Voltaire). Reggae (Bo Jangles' Joe Gibbs-produced scene-setter Prophesy Reveal) and disco (Sheila & B. Devotion's Spacer) bookmark the set. B-sides serve up new perspectives on Generation X and The Members, while The Diodes, Suzannes and The Middle Class send us directly to Savage's notes which, as always, provide expert commentary.

Mark Paytress

Sonic Youth

★★★

In/Out/In

THREE LOBED. CD/DL/LP

Rare and unheard exploratory jams from New York noiseniks' final decade.

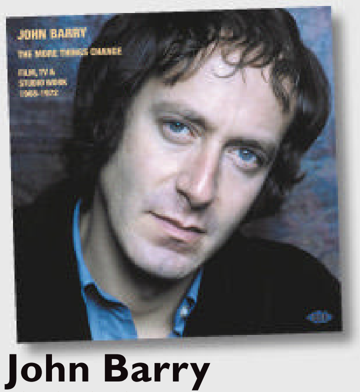
As the mirage of a post-Nirvana commercial crossover dissipated, Sonic Youth embarked upon a vision-quest, emancipating themselves from the strictures of traditional song-writing and (re)discovering the magic of jamming. This approach yielded some of their most beloved late-era albums (*Murray Street*; *Sonic Nurse*), and also their most-reviled (*New York City Ghosts And Flowers*). Collating errata and obscurios from 2000-2010, *In/Out/In* juggles motorik chugging, flashes of inspiration and passages of inscrutable din. Social Static's aimless amplifier hum slots firmly in the latter category, but much of the rest electrifies: Basement Contender's blissful wanderings, In & Out's gently simmering single-chord reveries, and the epic, hurtling squall of Out & In (an early version of Pattern Recognition). As with their self-released SYR series, the thrill lies in eavesdropping on experiments-in-progress, and as much in the quest itself as in the flashes of genius that occasionally arise.

Stevie Chick

COMING NEXT MONTH...

Neil Young, Oumou Sangaré (pictured), Rolling Blackouts Coastal Fever, The Black Keys, Kevin Morby, Jon Spencer, Norma Tanega, Warpaint, Willie Nelson, Sharon Van Etten, Michael Head, Sunflower Bean and more.

REISSUES EXTRA



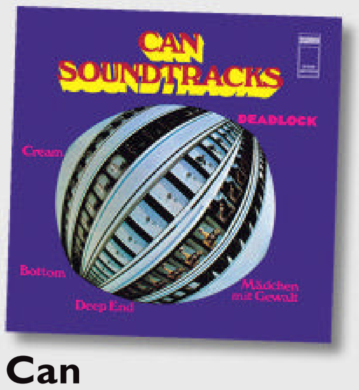
John Barry

★★★★

The More Things Change – Film, TV & Studio Work 1968-1973

ACE. CD

Bob Stanley curates 22 masterful orchestral screen reveries of between-worlds intrigue and romance. JB's theme to The Adventurer is a worthy foil to The Persuaders. Prepare to step outside normal time. *IH*



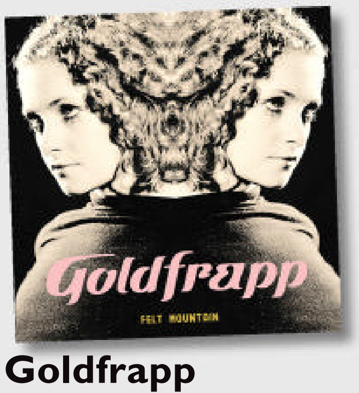
Can

★★★★

Soundtracks

MUTE. LP

1970's two-vocalist film music collection, now on groovy purple vinyl: contains all-brains-blown megadriver Mother Sky and Soul Desert, where departing voice Malcolm Mooney signs off in annihilating style. Also available: 1969's still-startling debut *Monster Movie* on blue wax. *IH*



Goldfrapp

★★★★

Felt Mountain

MUTE/BMG. CD/LP

A new vogue for '60s STs and torch song fuelled the success of Goldfrapp's 2000's debut, with plush strings, Will Gregory's vintage synths and Alison Goldfrapp's *derelicte* diva heavy on early-hours ennui, while its eccentricity (cf. yodelling) has preserved its value. *DE*

Billy Mackenzie

★★★

Satellite Life: Recordings 1994-96

CHERRY RED. CD

The Associate's mid-'90s work, mostly unreleased in his lifetime and only ever spottily available, gets a 3-CD box. Too uneven for casual listeners, but fans will dig 16 unreleased cuts (Tallahatchie Pass a gem), while the Paul Haig co-write Give Me Time sounds like a lost Bond theme. *KC*

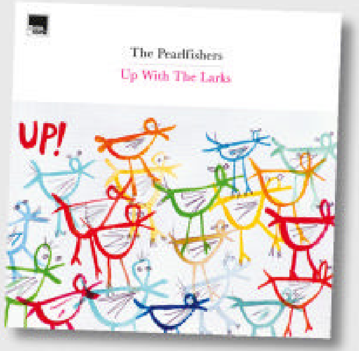
The Madness

★★★

The Madness

BMG. LP

Having made Woody and Bedders walk the plank, and with Mike Barson already gone, the rump Madness's '88 unsuccessful, questionable semi-makeover signified their renouncing of nuttiness for supposed gravity and nuance. Songs aren't helped by antiseptic drumbox-crazy production, but it's better than its reputation allows. *IH*



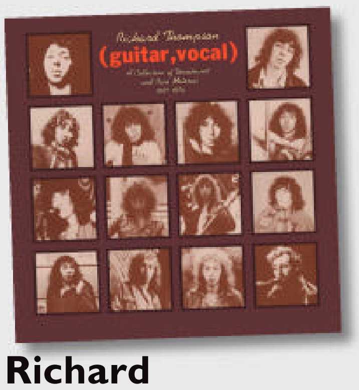
The Pearlfishers

★★★★

Up With The Larks

MARINA. LP

Now expanded on double vinyl, 2007's seventh LP by Glasgow pop believer David Scott presents a finely hewn song cycle of love, winter, and flowers, with aromas of The Beach Boys, Randy Newman, Prefab Sprout and more. Also out on wax, 1999's *The Young Picnickers* and 2001's *Across The Milky Way*. *IH*



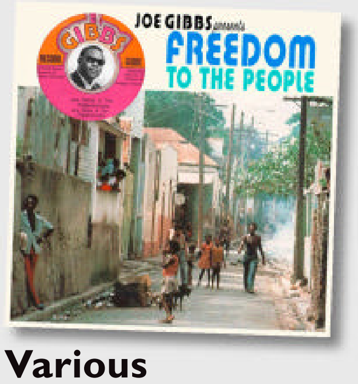
Richard Thompson

★★★★

(Guitar, Vocal)

UMC. LP

Not quite so rare these days, of course, given subsequent Fairport and Richard & Linda box sets/deluxe eds. Still this 1976 comp, back on vinyl, remains handy: Sandy Denny's Ballad Of Easy Rider and '75 live jams of Night Comes In and Calvary Cross are always worth revisiting. *JM*



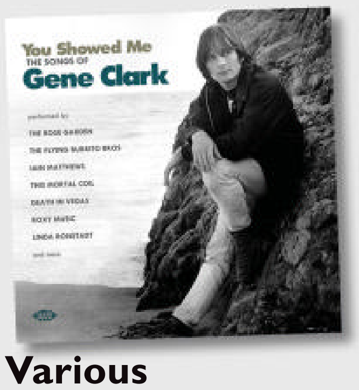
Various

★★★★

Joe Gibbs Presents: Freedom To The People

DOCTOR BIRD. CD

Top-drawer 54-track comp of early-reggae gems produced by Gibbs from 1971-72. Highlights include The Heptones' exquisitely soulful Hypocrites, Judy Mowatt's honeyed take on The Staple Singers' The Gardener and sax king Tommy McCook's Ah So. *SM*



Various

★★★

You Showed Me: The Songs Of Gene Clark

ACE. CD

No doubting the ex-Byrd's craft, but highlights here stick closest to Clark's core templates. Keepers: Flamin' Groovies, Rose Garden, Iain Matthews, New Grass Revival, Burritos, Baird Sisters, Clark's son Kai. Curios: Roxy Music's staggeringly un-psychedelic Eight Miles High. *JM*

RATINGS & FORMATS

Your guide to the month's best music is now even more definitive with our handy format guide.

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Tortoise: (from left) John Herndon, David Pajo, Jeff Parker, Doug McCombs, Dan Bitney, John McEntire.

Tortoise

Chicago post-rock's first family. Prepare to shell out, warns **John Mulvey.**

STERN VIZIERS of instrumental post-rock, it's easy to see Tortoise as a rather cerebral band. Picture them in their shared Chicago loft in the late '90s, giant portraits of John Coltrane overlooking a scene of intensive, relentless musical virtuosity. For one track on 1998's *TNT*, they chose the title In Sarah, Mencken, Christ, And Beethoven There Were Women And Men, a small twist on the name of an epic poem by John Barton Wolgamot; try shouting out for that banger at a gig. A multiple-disc compilation album of rarities, 2006's *A Lazarus Taxon*, derived its name from a paleontological term for organisms that disappear off the face of the earth, only to reappear much later down the line.

Smart guys, then. But to classify Tortoise and their music as a somewhat detached intellectual exercise is to miss out on the joy and brilliance of one of the most thrilling musical collectives of the past 30 years. Tortoise exist as a bridge between musical worlds, having grown out of formative punk and post-hardcore experiences to come together in Chicago and fold a wealth of diverse influences – jazz, electronica, dub, systems music, spaghetti western scores, folk, funk, Brazilian pop and much more – into a cohesive whole. "Tortoise is so unoriginal they're totally original," wrote Alan Licht in *A Lazarus Taxon*'s sleevenotes. "Functioning as a kind of clearing house by assimilating these influences, they've avoided mere eclecticism."

Beloved of skaters as well as chinstrokers, creators of music that, as MOJO reader Phil Bloomfield writes to us, "you could play at 4am in a club and no one would bat an eyelid", Tortoise contain multitudes. And that goes for their extended universe. The number of bands and projects that can be incorporated into the Tortoise family tree is vast and, to some, daunting.

But for the purposes of keeping this How To Buy under control, we've restricted ourselves to those in which the core multi-instrumentalist Tortoise members – Dan Bitney, Doug McCombs, Jeff Parker, John Herndon and John McEntire, plus co-founder Bundy K Brown – are key players. As the lyrics of Rock On, one of their few vocal tracks, posit, "Where do we go from here?"

"So unoriginal they're totally original."

CAST YOUR VOTES...

This month you chose your Top 10 Tortoise LPs. Next month we want your Gil Scott-Heron Top 10. Send selections via Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or e-mail to mojo@bauermedia.co.uk with the subject 'How To Buy Gil Scott-Heron' and we'll print the best comments.

10 Tortoise
The Catastrophist

THRILL JOCKEY, 2016

You say: "A great record, playful even, showing the band's complex yet emotive virtuosity." Keith Giblin, via Twitter

Tortoise released their first four group albums between 1994 and 2001. But in the last 20 years, busier than ever with so many other projects, they've only managed three more. 2004's *It's All Around You* is frequently undervalued, but this most recent set is an especially satisfying reunion: heavier on the synths than of old (note prog electronica high mass, Gesceap), but with plenty of the trademark nimbleness. And, in a radical shift, vocals, courtesy of Yo La Tengo's Georgia Hubley and Dead Rider's Todd Rittman. The latter excels on an industrial squelch-funk rewiring of David Essex's Rock On, mysteriously erased from streaming versions of *The Catastrophist*.

4 Tortoise
A Lazarus Taxon

THRILL JOCKEY, 2006

You say: "Gamera is pretty much perfect." Stuart Braithwaite, via Facebook

For a survey of Tortoise's awesome range, this 3-CD+DVD box set of singles, remixes, rarities and assorted critical ephemera is pretty much essential. Pride of place goes to Gamera/Cliff Dweller Society, two epic tracks (11:53 and 15:23) first released on a 1995 12-inch for Stereolab's Duophonic label. A propulsive collage of folk, motorik, jazz, dub, *musique concrète* et al that significantly expanded the concept of post-rock, MOJO readers overwhelmingly named Gamera as their favourite Tortoise track in this survey. Worth sticking around for the other 33 pieces, of course, not least covers of Duke Ellington and Joy Division (Didjeridoo and As You Said) and two Autechre remixes that cement Tortoise's bond with the '90s electronic avant-garde.

JEFF PARKER
FORFOLKS

9 Jeff Parker
Forfolks

INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM/ NONESUCH, 2021

You say: "Parker's two newest albums are just absolute perfection, proof that he's grown into one of the best guitarists of all time." Nathan Walker, via Twitter

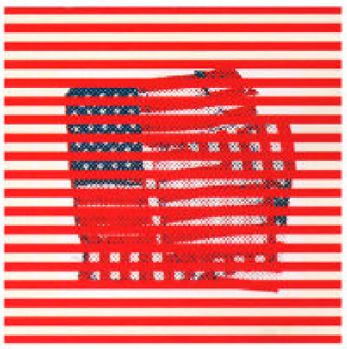
A nuanced, unshowy guitarist and the only Tortoise member with roots in jazz rather than punk, Parker also has the heftiest discography under his own name. Alongside 2005's *The Relatives* and 2020's *Suite For Max Brown*, this eighth solo set might be his best. While those other standouts are band sessions, *Forfolks* finds Parker totally alone, balancing a finessed understanding of jazz history (Thelonious Monk's Ugly Beauty is covered) with a loop station set-up that sends his filigreed lines towards ambient spaces. Tortoise completists should go straight to La Jetée, a new version of the recurring tune that appeared on *TNT* as Jetty.

8 Directions
Directions In Music

THRILL JOCKEY, 1996

You say: "Explores ideas only hinted at in Tortoise: majestic, major-key jams, studio cut-and-paste collages, pre-Pullman campfire acoustic ditties and even an Allman Brothers homage." Jonathan Cohen, via Twitter

Although he left soon after their first album, arriving in the band with John McEntire via their scholarships in Bastro and Gastr Del Sol, Bundy K Brown has a critical place in Tortoise lore. His own band, Directions, made a kind of organic dance music that streamlined post-rock's intricacies; cyclical grooves, disparately informed by folk and choogle, that could have rolled on forever. Also: Directions' 1997 Echoes 12-inch upgrades the formula to incorporate zingy, jazz-inflected beat science, and inspired a generation of producers like Four Tet in the process.



7 Tortoise
Standards

THRILL JOCKEY, 2001

You say: "The opening of Seneca, with those huge chords and drum break, feels like the purest possible distillation of rock music." Ed Gillett, via Twitter

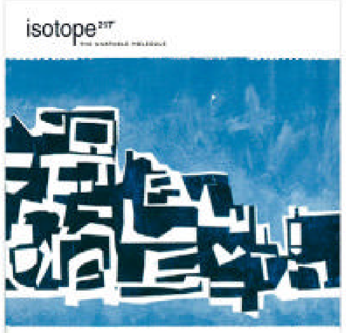
The fourth Tortoise album does indeed begin with a molten rock set-piece; a Jeff Parker solo that echoes Hendrix's Star-Spangled Banner – somewhat fitting for a record with a digitally distressed American flag on its cover. Soon enough though, Seneca – and *Standards* in general – moves into glitchy, micro-detailed electronic zones, with the live instrumentation sliced and diced into ever more punchy textures. John McEntire's contemporaneous work producing Stereolab is a good analogue. Amid much high-end tricksiness, the tunes are still great: witness Blackjack, perhaps their greatest stab at an imaginary John Barry spy theme.

6 Brokeback
Looks At The Bird

THRILL JOCKEY, 2003

You say: "Brokeback is the fulfilment of the prophecy told by Ry Cooder's soundtrack for Paris, Texas." Recliner Notes, via Twitter

If early Tortoise had a single signature sound, it might just be the twang of Doug McCombs' six-string bass. Also a member of Eleventh Dream Day for over 30 years, McCombs' plangent skills were pushed even further to the fore as leader of Brokeback. Since debuting in 1997, Brokeback have gradually become a gnarlier, more conventional rock band, but this atmospheric burner from 2003 is the pick: McCombs on manoeuvres around Noel Kupersmith's double bass, with support from John McEntire and, on wordless harmonies, the late Stereolab singer Mary Hansen.



5 Isotope 217
The Unstable Molecule

THRILL JOCKEY, 1997

You say: "It's the most accessible and should open the door for some of the slightly more challenging stuff." Jamie Donald, via Twitter

Ostensibly Tortoise reconstituted with the focus on jazz, Isotope 217 saw the core band's Jeff Parker and percussionists/utility players Dan Bitney and John Herndon teaming up with Chicago hitters Rob Mazurek (cornet), Matt Lux (bass) and Sara P Smith (trombone). The first and best of their three albums, *The Unstable Molecule* sits neatly in between Tortoise's *TNT* and Mazurek's Chicago Underground projects, connecting post-rock to purer jazz excursions, with Mazurek and Smith's horns slotting elegantly into the matrix. The version of scene standard La Jetée/ Jetty is the first to be released, and perhaps the best.

3 Pullman
Turnstyles & Junkpiles

THRILL JOCKEY, 1998

You say: "That debut Pullman disc is gorgeous: sun-dappled Chicago lo-fi loft acoustic loveliness." Rusted Rail, via Twitter

If the fingerpicked intro to Gamera suggested a folk path less travelled for Tortoise, the debut by Pullman made good on that promise. An acoustic guitar symposium with Bundy K Brown, Douglas McCombs, Chris Brokaw (of Codeine, Come, Lemonheads and much else) and Curtis Harvey (from Rex), Pullman crafted delicate, beatless instrumentals that could've been purpose-built, in another time, for John Fahey's Takoma imprint. Standout track Gravenhurst also ropes in another fleeting Tortoise member, Slint co-founder and all-round post-rock MVP David Pajo, whose early albums as Aerial M and Papa M privilege a similar bucolic feel.

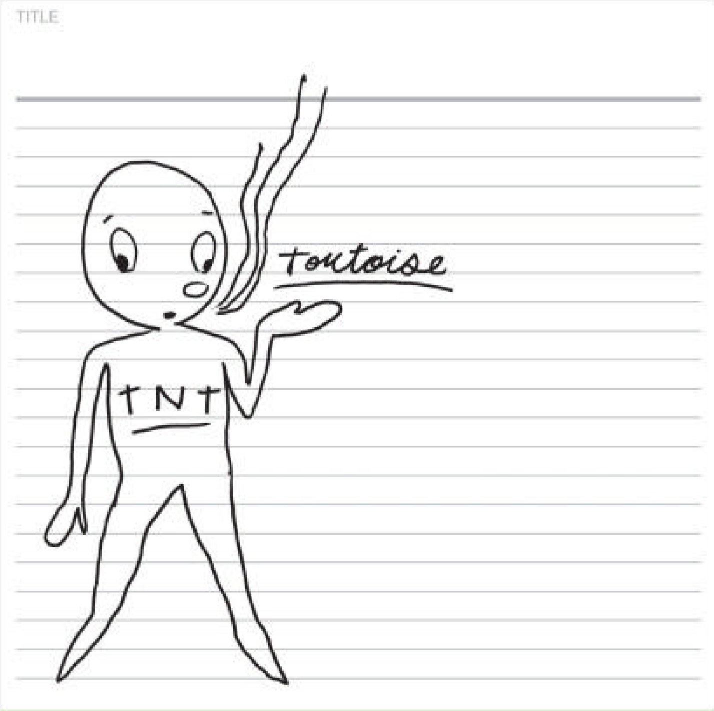
TORTOISE
millions now living will never die

2 Tortoise
Millions Now Living Will Never Die

THRILL JOCKEY, 1996

You say: "They're true inheritors of prog, not that long, drawn-out style of soft metal that adopted the term." Richard Littler, via Twitter

Tortoise's self-titled debut, in 1994, showcased a band tentatively stepping out of the post-hardcore scene, into quieter and more musically diverse worlds. But it was a 1995 remix set, *Rhythms, Resolutions & Clusters* (included in *A Lazarus Taxon*), that really showed the possibilities of this evolving new music. *Millions Now Living* compounds those adventures, with a dynamic elastic sound hinging on multiple percussionists and bassists. Djed, over 21 constantly shifting minutes and time signatures, is a pulsating sequel to Gamera, and an increasing taste for vibraphones signpost the next step, into jazzier terrain…



1 Tortoise
TNT

THRILL JOCKEY, 1998

You say: "I was living in Chicago and would drive home to that album with the massive gleaming city on my left and big Lake Michigan on my right. It's the sound of evening falling on a brilliant city that's so close and yet so far." Matthew Reed Baker, via Twitter

With the arrival of Jeff Parker, Tortoise were primed for their masterpiece – an album that builds on everything they had learned on their journey thus far. *TNT* honours the sprung rhythms of post-rock, but it also swings a lot harder, with stronger jazz and funk influences – plus additional doses of Steve Reich, Ennio Morricone and Brazilian pop – seamlessly incorporated into the mix. And as their musical virtuosity increased, so did John McEntire's production chops, with the result that *TNT* makes the transitions between organic jams and digital processing equally harmonious. Chicago's rich and interlocking musical traditions, perpetually in flux, crystallised in 12 tracks and 64 minutes.

NOW DIG THIS

ELEVENTH DREAM DAY

Chicagoan Joel Berk wrote to MOJO about how Tortoise's core members were "the musical connective tissue of the city… If any of those dudes were on the gig, the other players had to be good." Consequently, it's hard to go wrong with Tortoise offshoots or their prehistory in Bastro, Slint, Gastr Del Sol (1993's *The Serpentine Similar*) and Eleventh Dream Day (start with 1989's *Beet*). John McEntire's gargantuan discography involves many fine Sea & Cake albums, inventive productions and a nice soundtrack (1999's *Reach The Rock*). Also recommended: John Herndon's DJ-friendly beatscapes as A Grape Dope (especially 2020's *Backyard Bangers*); Tortoise's covers set with Bonnie 'Prince' Billy, *The Brave And The Bold* (2006); and the whole adjacent David Pajo universe (seek out Papa M's incredible 2000 version of Turn! Turn! Turn!).

Agence Dalle, Getty

It's a family affair: Martha Wainwright, serial truth-teller.

Meet the folks

Brilliantly candid memoir from the youngest of the Wainwright-McGarrigles. By **James McNair.**

Stories I Might Regret Telling You: A Memoir

★★★★

Martha Wainwright

SIMON & SCHUSTER. £20

AS SEASONED WAINWRIGHT & McGarrigle watchers will know, the clan's airing of its dirty laundry via song has long been a thing. Martha Wainwright's candid memoir ups the ante from its title down, however. Her lean, vivid prose and tendency to be hardest on herself bring you onside, but discomfiting events are rife. A year into chemo for sarcoma cancer, Wainwright's mother Kate McGarrigle flies to London to see Martha sing Kurt Weill. Domiciled chez Martha, she is repeatedly awoken by her daughter and pals dancing to Laurie Anderson's O Superman in their underwear while high on MDMA. "Kate [eventually] appeared with an expression that said, 'Don't fuck with me, I'm dying'" writes Wainwright, opining her mother was more worried than angry. "She knew she'd be leaving me for good soon, and here I was, still a mess."

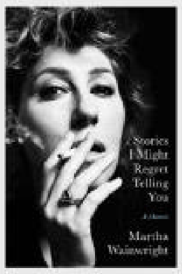
'Messy' is perhaps the defining adjective of Wainwright's life, but her story is an extremely complex one beautifully told. As the baptised-in-song child of Kate and Loudon Wainwright III – and the kid sister of piano wunderkind Rufus – fate had a plan for her. Or as she puts it: "Once you're in the circus, it's hard to get out." If she initially lacks confidence, it figures. She must contend with her father's seeming indifference to her, a mother describing her as "the definition of mediocrity", and the humbling experience of subsisting on the sales of her CDs she makes at Rufus's gigs while she's still unsigned – until her 2005 EP, Bloody Mother Fucking Asshole, establishes her own unflinching voice, and her career gains traction and acclaim.

We read of her heroin use (smoking, not injecting) while living in NYC. Of her bisexual flings and of her 2007 marriage to Brad Albetta, and how their wedding reception was part-fuelled by "some really good blow". Encounters with Leonard Cohen and The Band's Garth Hudson are distilled to their essence in a few exquisitely deployed sentences. Meanwhile, the tensions in her nuclear family burn on. All's fair in love, recrimination and genetics – and instantly forgotten the moment any configuration of Wainwrights and/or McGarrigles unites in song, which is often.

Wainwright's serial honesty also extends to her methodology here, the book taking seven years to complete, and securing her two separate advances, one of which she gave back. "I've burnt copies and used the backs of pages as scrap paper on which to teach my kids addition and subtraction" she writes. "An early draft was used as evidence against me in my divorce case."

Happy with new partner Nico, brought closer to brother Rufus by their mother's passing in 2010, and having weathered legal and custodial battles with Brad Albetta over their children, Wainwright seems strong by the book's end, a working mother with a hard-won understanding of her parents' strengths and failings, and "why I almost wasn't born". She's responsible now too. Most of the time, anyway. "Once in a while I still find myself in a taxi cab at six in the morning, laughing my tits off."

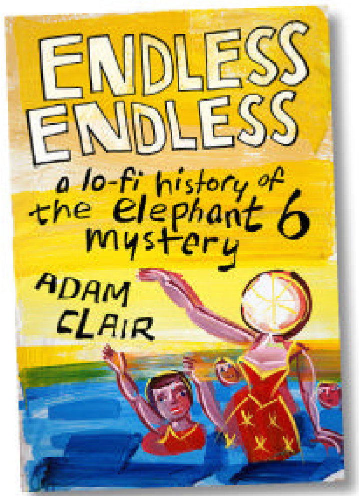
> "Once you are in the circus, it's hard to get out."
> **MARTHA WAINWRIGHT**



WHAT WE'VE LEARNT

- Wainwright's father Loudon wanted her mother Kate McGarrigle to abort her. "Perhaps he should never have told me. I don't think my mum would have."
- Making 2012's *Come Home To Mama* with producer Yuka Honda at Sean Lennon's home studio, Wainwright sang from inside a cupboard containing John Lennon's *Sgt. Pepper* jacket.
- Van Morrison once came onto Martha "in a way that was not only sexist and boorish but uninteresting and sad."
- Wainwright's ex-husband and sometime producer Brad Albetta's generic name for smaller record labels was "Catbutt Records".

Andrew Testa/Shutterstock



Endless Endless: A Lo-Fi History Of The Elephant 6 Mystery

★★★

Adam Clair

HACHETTE. £22

Definitive account of Athens, Georgia's '90s indie-psych scene.

"We existed in our insular world," said Neutral Milk Hotel's Jeff Mangum of Elephant 6, the incestuous underground movement that surfaced in 1990s Athens, Georgia. Clair's giddy tome mostly succeeds in infiltrating that world, offering intimate perspectives on scene luminaries like The Apples In Stereo, Of Montreal, Olivia Tremor Control and more, while his endearingly gossipy and affectionate tone revels in every internal bust-up and no-budget act of acid-pop lunacy. However, the mysteries within the scene's most-acclaimed group, Neutral Milk Hotel, remain elusive, not least because Jeff Mangum has refused almost all interviews since their final album, *In The Aeroplane Over The Sea*, became a cultural touchstone. Interviews with bandmates and contemporaries compile the most complete account yet of the group's demise and their leader's subsequent "creative truancy", but the enigmatic Mangum and his ongoing silence remain insoluble riddles.

Stevie Chick

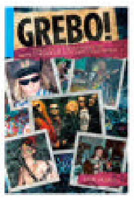
Grebo! The Loud & Lousy Story Of Gaye Bykers On Acid And Crazyhead

★★★

Rich Deakin

HEADPRESS. £12.95

The messy life and times of Leicester's scuzzy alt-rock outsiders.



'Grebo' was a catch-all term applied by the music press to those late-'80s/early-'90s groups fusing punk, metal, psychedelia and industrial sounds – "Gaye Bykers On Acid and their grubby ilk," according to NME's Stuart Maconie. This deep dive into the tale of Midlands standard-bearers GBOA and Crazyhead is rich in pathos, (sometimes unintentional) humour and an awful lot of detail. Every line-up change, side project and pivotal moment is explored, including the time Bykers acolyte and MOJO Art Editor Mark 'Wag' Wagstaff was shot in the groin with a starting pistol in Burton-On-Trent. The bands' self-deprecating wit and independence was part of their charm, but resulted in self-sabotage, with GBOA frittering away Virgin's money on an ill-fated movie to accompany their debut album, *Drill Your Own Hole*. Although Crazyhead played Russia *and* Namibia in 1991, world domination was never on the cards. But Deakin's account suggests it was great fun while it lasted.

Mark Blake

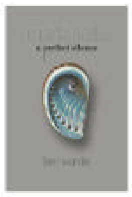
Mark Hollis: A Perfect Silence

★★★★

Ben Wardle

ROCKET 88. £30

From pop star to post-rock visionary, an intensely private man revealed.



Few musicians have taken a journey quite as radical as the founder of Talk Talk. In six years Mark Hollis moved from second-string synth-popster to creator of a radical new music that embraced modern classical, jazz and ambient. Telling the story of Hollis, who died of cancer in 2019, is no easy task. He was intensely private and a self-described "difficult geezer". But in this well-researched biog, Wardle is excellent on the nightmarish process of making Hollis's masterpiece, *Spirit Of Eden* ("the worst session of my life," said guest bassist Danny Thompson). The author is wary of the image of Hollis as a tortured genius destroyed by greedy majors: the enigmatic final album *Laughing Stock* was only made possible thanks to £1million of Polydor's money. Then life after the pop game was eased by owning a Porsche Boxster and a Ducati Monster bike, plus multiple rounds of golf.

John Bungey

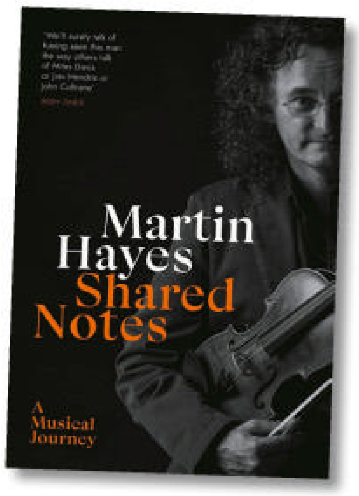
Shared Notes: A Musical Journey

★★★

Martin Hayes

TRANSWORLD. £20

From Clare to here – the tale of a traditional Irish fiddle player.



From his beguiling solo playing to duo work with guitarist Dennis Cahill and the trailblazing neo-classical supergroup The Gloaming, Martin Hayes' celebrated status in Irish traditional circles scarcely has equal. With gentle understatement, Hayes details his journey from humble beginnings on a farm in east Clare, learning his trade with the fabled Tulla Céilí Band alongside his father PJ Hayes, through a dabble with politics, a rebellious dive into raucous bar bands playing Celtic rock in Chicago, followed by an almost overnight redemption; rejecting drink, drugs and meat to find unlikely success rediscovering musical purity with stripped-down tunes rooted in his own rural heritage. It's a spiritual journey with some interesting stuff about his influences and his relationship with the music, though the polite telling leaves you wanting to know more about the wild partying and inter-band shenanigans. Motley Crüe's The Dirt it isn't.

Colin Irwin

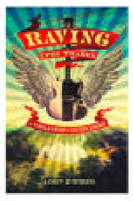
Raving Upon Thames: An Untold Story Of Sixties London

★★★★

Andrew Humphreys

PARADISE ROAD. £20

Musical high times in London TW19.



As former Time Out writer Andrew Humphreys explains here: "I never meant to write this book. I only wanted to read it." His passion for the subject drives this warm-hearted, in-depth study of how 'Thames Delta' venues such as Eel Pie Island became a crucible for British rock. Naturally, the Stones and the Yardbirds loom large. But the Eel Pie hotel's before and after-life is also fascinating. Humphreys explains how the trad-versus-modern jazz wars played out here ("Go home, dirty bopper!") and revisits a time when the venue became a refuge for squatters, and former patron Peter Green showed up to play a candlelit fundraiser, "where everyone was too stoned to remember to pass the bucket around." Some rarely seen photos of "dancing dead-beats" and ravers hanging off the ceiling beams at the Crawdaddy help crank up the atmosphere.

Mark Blake

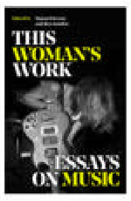
This Woman's Work

★★★★

Sinéad Gleeson & Kim Gordon (Ed.)

WHITE RABBIT. £20

Powerful collection of music writing that combines poetry, prose and polemic.



Women's words have traditionally been sidelined in the male canon of music writing, but with this volume, 16 female writers focus on music with fierce eloquence, exploring what it means to them in wildly different ways. Margo Jefferson, for instance, meditates on Ella Fitzgerald – the sweat and dedication that it took for her to become a bebop scat diva, while Kim Gordon profiles no wave pioneer and co-collaborator Yoshimi, and Liz Pelly tells the story of Sis Cunningham, unsung heroine of the Broadside folk scene. There's Leslie Jamison's captivating chapter on mixtapes that shaped her life, Megan Jasper recalling with earthy humour the early days of Sub Pop, and Fatima Bhutto writing on music under dictatorship and in exile. Most astonishing is poet Simone White immersing herself in trap and drill and creating her own hybrid literary form.

Lucy O'Brien

Pioneer woman at work: Yoshimi P-We on-stage with Boredoms, 2016.

Getty

Her majesty: Norma Waterson, the queen of British folk's first family.

A True Hearted Woman

Passionate voice of folk song, **Norma Waterson** left us on January 30.

HER HUSBAND MARTIN Carthy described Norma Waterson as "an extraordinary balance of timidity and fearlessness", while Billy Bragg called her "one of the defining voices of the English traditional music." With the all-consuming passion with which she threw herself into every vocal, and her masterful powers of storytelling, she was also, undoubtedly, a pivotal driving force of the modern folk revival.

Yet, as offhandedly unassuming off-stage as she was full-bloodedly committed on it, she insisted she did just what came naturally. "I'm basically a shy person," she said, "but when I'm singing I don't give a shit."

Her unique singing style – described by daughter Eliza Carthy as "barrel-aged richness" – was forged by a tight-knit musical upbringing in Hull with her younger siblings Mike and Elaine (Lal). Her father played guitar, her mother was a pianist and all her aunts and uncles played music in some form. Yet, orphaned at eight, it was her part-Irish, part-Gypsy grandmother Eliza Ward who largely raised the siblings and became their strongest musical influence, singing to them everything from music hall to jazz and opera.

They went on to form a skiffle group with second cousin John Harrison, becoming The Watersons when they jettisoned American material to seek out the English tradition. Their thrilling unison singing with powerful Yorkshire accents gave the tradition a vibrancy not heard before and, kick-started by classic 1965 debut album *Frost & Fire*, electrified the British folk club movement.

> "I'm basically a shy person, but when I'm singing I don't give a shit."
> **NORMA WATERSON**

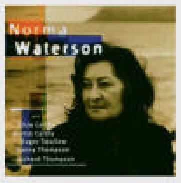
Exhausted by constant touring and deeply unimpressed by such descriptions as "the folk Beatles", they split in 1968, Norma disappearing to Montserrat, where she remained for four years, working as a DJ on Radio Antilles.

Her return to the UK coincided with the recording of 1972's landmark *Bright Phoebus* album, which showcased the songwriting of brother Mike and sister Lal. It led to a rebirth of the unaccompanied Watersons, with Norma's new husband Carthy slotting in alongside. Her biggest statement, however, came at the age of 57, with her astonishingly versatile solo debut *Norma Waterson* coming within one vote of winning the 1996 Mercury Music Prize. She left the ceremony raving about winners Pulp and saying she wanted to adopt singer Jarvis Cocker.

She went on to make two more outstanding and varied solo albums, *The Very Thought Of You* (1999) and *Bright Shiny Morning* (2001), followed by six albums and regular tours with husband and daughter in Waterson:Carthy and two duo albums *Gift* (2010) and *Anchor* (2018) with Eliza, the latter recorded in a local church when, despite her physical frailty, her voice was as passionate, yet intimate, as ever.

"I don't mind that I'm getting to the end of my life," she told this writer two years ago. "I've had a wonderful life. I couldn't have asked for anything more."

Colin Irwin



THE LEGACY

The Album: *Norma Waterson* (Hannibal, 1996)

The Sound: Known for unaccompanied singing of traditional song, Norma's debut solo album was an extraordinary tour de force. Assisted by Richard Thompson, Danny Thompson and others, she roared into everything from 1920s Tin Pan Alley (There Ain't No Sweet Man That's Worth The Salt Of My Tears) and the Grateful Dead (Black Muddy River) and made them her own.

Tom Howard

Betty Davis

Trailblazer of funk

BORN 1945

"I figured it would be better to have them cover me when I was alive than when I was dead," said Betty Davis of her decision to end decades of silence and participate in the 2017 documentary Betty: They Say I'm Different. She consented to be heard but not seen, preferring not to dilute memories of her mid-'70s incarnation as the Afro-futurist funk-rock warrior queen that the music industry didn't know what to do with.

Born Betty Gray Mabry, she grew up in North Carolina and Pennsylvania before hightailing it to New York to study fashion. A Greenwich Village scenester, she released sporadic singles and sold Uptown to The Chambers Brothers, but it was as a pioneering black model that she first found success, and how she met Miles Davis. He introduced her to Rachmaninov and Stravinsky; she turned him on to Jimi Hendrix and Sly Stone and suggested the name 'Bitches Brew'. Their volcanic marriage only lasted a year, but she earned the surname.

The three albums that Davis recorded between 1973 and 1975 were a revolution in black female self-expression. On songs such as Nasty Gal, Anti-Love Song and He Was A Big Freak, her throaty roar and unconquerable carnality made her a controversial trailblazer, boycotted by the NAACP for setting a bad example. "If Betty were singing today, she'd be something like Madonna, something like Prince, only as a woman," Miles wrote in 1989. "She was ahead of her time."

Too far ahead, it turned out. As Davis lamented in 1975, "The one thing that I wish was an advantage, but isn't, is being the first to do something." She was dropped by Island before she could release her fourth album, and checked out of music altogether after her father's death in 1980. Janelle Monáe called her, "one of the godmothers of redefining how black women in music can be viewed."

Dorian Lynskey

Goodbye, Nasty: pioneering, fearless Betty Davis.

Sam Lay

Chicago blues and Dylan drummer

BORN 1935

The Alabama-born Lay drummed for Chicago blues big daddies Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters and Little Walter. Known for his self-designed flamboyant outfits, he created a unique style dubbed "the Sam Lay double-shuffle" – a polyrhythm marked by the relentless riding of snare and cymbal. He joined The Paul Butterfield Blues Band, interracial blues-rock pioneers whose self-titled 1965 debut album revolutionised rock and who were admitted to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2015. Along with the band's guitar god Michael Bloomfield, Lay backed-up Bob Dylan at the infamous 1965 Newport Folk Festival and played on *Highway 61 Revisited*. (He claimed to have supplied Dylan with the title track's siren whistle from his keychain.) John Anderson's 2015 documentary Sam Lay In Bluesland featured many name musicians influenced by Lay. "When I play the blues," says session giant Jim Keltner, "I want to sound like Sam Lay."

Michael Simmons

> "She was ahead of her time."
>
> MILES DAVIS ON BETTY DAVIS

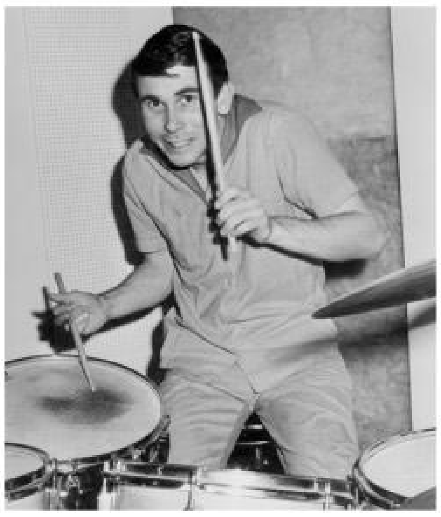
Sandy Nelson

Drumming man

BORN 1938

Born in Santa Monica, Sandy Nelson was a high school contemporary of Jan & Dean and Kim Fowley, and played drums in bands alongside future luminaries including Beach Boy Bruce Johnston, Nik Venet and Terry Melcher. As a session player, his credits included 1958 Number 1 To Know Him Is To Love Him by Phil Spector's group The Teddy Bears: he also played with Gene Vincent's Blue Caps, The Ventures and Duane Eddy. Inspired by Cozy Cole and Earl Palmer, he soon started scoring his own instrumental drumming hits, going UK and US Top 10 with 1959's Teen Beat and 1961's signature thumper Let There Be Drums. A 1963 motorbike collision with a school bus – Nelson later said that Bonnie Raitt was on board – led to the amputation of part of his right leg, though he adapted his style and drummed on, recording more than 30 solo LPs into the mid-'70s. After getting sober, he moved to Boulder City, Nevada, where he liked to excavate caves (which he called 'Veeble Land') in his back garden. Nelson later played keyboards and drums with ex-Three Dog Night guitarist James Quill Smith's band, and continued to make live appearances into his late seventies.

Ian Harrison



Getty (3)

Mr Congeniality: the soulful and eclectic Gary Brooker.

Farewell, Old Salt

Gary Brooker, the voice and pianist of Procol Harum, left us on February 22.

GARY BROOKER was the singer and co-composer of one of the most radical, pivotal and colossally popular singles ever, soundtracking '67's Summer of Love on the global radio just as evocatively as *Sgt. Pepper* did on the world's turntables.

Yet if A Whiter Shade Of Pale – a UK Number 1 and US Number 5 – resounded with enigmatic portentousness with an organ tune descended from Bach, its creators, Procol Harum, never took themselves quite seriously enough to reap in full the harvest of their very English hybrid of black America and conservatoire Europe. To Traffic, Genesis and Roxy Music arguably fell the richest pickings of the unlikely compound of elements that Sandie Shaw's sometime backing band put together in search of something new.

His father Harry the pedal steel player for Felix Mendelssohn's Hawaiian Serenaders, Gary Brooker was born on May 29, 1945 in Hackney, east London. The family moved to the Essex seaside resort of Southend when he was nine. A musical child, he drank in the popular classics with the same enthusiasm as he did rock'n'roll and R&B. Ray Charles was an obvious inspiration as singer and pianist in the band he co-founded, The Paramounts: a fixture on the mid-'60s R&B live club circuit, they were rated by the Stones and selected to support The Beatles. But by 1966, real deal American artists were touching down in the UK, making homegrown covers acts redundant; only the creative would survive.

With anything possible as the music industry danced the light fandango in the swirl of the new counterculture, donning kaftans and groovily naming the rejigged band after a pedigree cat at scenemaker Guy Stevens' suggestion were not the silliest ideas in the world. Nor was pairing up with a word-drunk lyricist in thrall to peak-visionary Dylan.

Unlike the snug dovetailing of Elton John and Bernie Taupin, Gary Brooker and fellow East Ender Keith Reid struggled to accommodate each other. "Keith was quite particular that every 'and' or 'the' stayed in the song. I just adjusted the music to fit," Gary told this writer in 2018. "He was never writing poetry – he was writing lyrics to be sung. Though songs didn't always come out the way he thought they would. A Salty Dog [1969] he actually wrote as a comedy; I saw it as dramatic and deep, and fitted the music accordingly."

After nine LPs, the band went on hiatus in 1977, but Brooker was back to helm successful post-1991 reformations that only ended with the advent of Covid. In addition, Gary's wry, congenial gift for fitting in and pitching in admitted him to the rockbroker aristocracy (over the years he played with Paul, George and Ringo, Eric Clapton and Kate Bush, and oversaw charity gigs featuring Van Morrison, Tom Jones and Nick Mason, among others). But it's for his soulful voice, eclectic musicality and commitment to an extraordinary collective vision that he'll be remembered.

Mat Snow

"Donning kaftans and naming the band after a pedigree cat…"

Procol Harum
Grand Hotel

THE LEGACY

The Album: Procol Harum *Grand Hotel* (Chrysalis, 1973)

The Sound: For a band labelled 'prog', Southend's finest could struggle with consistency at album level, but their sixth studio effort got closest. A wholly satisfying vision of fading grandeur and louche comedy with tunes as rich as the arrangements, it inspired Douglas Adams writing his Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy series.

Getty

Ian McDonald: the Crimson King's courtier.

Ian McDonald

Modest maestro of King Crimson and Foreigner

BORN 1946

Ian McDonald, composer, arranger and multi-instrumentalist, pioneered not one but two music genres. First he was a key creator of *In The Court Of The Crimson King*, the most influential album in progressive rock, then seven years on he co-founded Foreigner, whose multi-platinum AOR spawned multiple imitators. McDonald learnt his trade over five years as a British Army bandsman. By the time he hooked up with the struggling pop trio of Giles, Giles and Fripp in London to form King Crimson, he played various reeds and woodwinds as well as guitar, vibes and keyboards. But when Crimson's debut album became an overnight sensation in 1969, McDonald, a self-effacing and modest man, struggled to cope with the pressure and swiftly quit. He recorded *McDonald And Giles* with fellow Crimson exile Michael Giles on drums, offering a lighter contrast to KC's gothic anthems. The album was not a commercial success and McDonald played sessions – the saxophone solo on T. Rex's Get It On is his. When talk of rejoining a later version of King Crimson in 1974 stalled, McDonald helped to start Foreigner and played on three albums featuring such radio staples as Cold As Ice and Feels Like The First Time. "I just contribute to whatever situation I'm in and really it's all the same to me," he once said. McDonald later toured with Steve Hackett, made the solo album *Drivers Eyes* and joined Honey West, a guitar band in his adopted Manhattan home. For many years McDonald said that he regretted leaving King Crimson – a hasty decision that guitarist Robert Fripp said "broke my heart." A second Crimson album with Fripp and McDonald together is one of the great 'what-ifs' of rock history. But more recently, McDonald came to terms with his departure, saying it had allowed him to explore the other musical opportunities that made up his rich musical life.

John Bungey

Dallas Good

Sadies co-founder

BORN 1973

Dallas Good was the tall, lean, Nudie-suited singer, writer, guitarist, and co-founder of The Sadies. The much-loved band – which also featured Dallas's brother Travis – were musicians' musicians, formidable live, whether playing their own material or backing up artists including Andre Williams, Buffy Sainte-Marie, Jon Spencer and Neil Young. Good came from Canadian country music royalty – his father and uncles founded award-winning folk and bluegrass band The Good Brothers – but his own early bands were Toronto punk and hardcore. "I initially rejected bluegrass for punk," Dallas said, "until I found out that bluegrass is a lot faster and harder to play." The Sadies' sound fused these with psych-folk, surf and garage rock. Tributes flooded in from fellow musicians including Kurt Vile, Patti Smith, Steve Albini, Alejandro Escovedo and Randy Bachman, who said, "Everything I could play on guitar he could play better." The band's new album was on the verge of release when he died from natural causes.

Sylvie Simmons

> **"I contribute to whatever situation I'm in, it's all the same to me."**
> **IAN McDONALD**

Syl Johnson

Blues and Soul man

BORN 1936

Born in Mississippi, Sylvester Thompson moved with his family to Chicago in his early teens. Fellow northward migrator Magic Sam was a neighbour, and the young Syl, whose brothers Mack and Jimmy also played the blues, sang with him and other local luminaries including Billy Boy Arnold, Howlin' Wolf and Jimmy Reed. Adopting his stage name and going solo in 1959, success came with increasingly conscious late-'60s US R&B hits Come Sock It To Me, Different Strokes and Is It Because I'm Black. In 1971 he signed to Hi Records, achieving US pop Top 50 success with his version of Al Green's Take Me To The River in 1975. He withdrew from music in the '80s, but returned the following decade after his earlier work found favour with hip-hoppers (Kanye West, Cypress Hill and Jay-Z were among those he pursued for unauthorised sampling, while he referred to his home as "the house that Wu-Tang built" due to clearance fees). Later activities included, in 2010, the Grammy-nominated Numero Group box set *Complete Mythology*, a 2015 feature-length documentary Any Way The Wind Blows and rekindling the old fire with justified live performances.

Clive Prior

Syl Johnson: he socked it to 'em.

Getty (3)

Ludwig
H.C.
Willie Mitchell

Rhythm master: Howard 'Bulldog' Grimes, drummer for the Stax and Hi labels.

Howard Grimes

Keeper of the Memphis Beat

BORN 1941

Known as 'Bulldog' for his tenacity behind the drumkit, Howard Grimes began playing professionally as a teen in the clubs of Memphis, Tennessee. In 1959 he backed Carla and Rufus Thomas on Cause I Love You for Satellite Records, soon to be renamed Stax; one of its first black musicians, Grimes would become a key player during the label's early years. A decade later he would join producer Willie 'Poppa' Mitchell, as part of another soul institution, the Hi Rhythm Section. His work for the Hi label would include, crucially, the first 10 albums by Al Green as well as classics by Ann Peebles, Syl Johnson and O.V. Wright, among others. In recent years, Grimes had become a member of throwback R&B outfit The Bo-Keys and in 2021 published a memoir titled Timekeeper: My Life In Rhythm.

Bob Mehr

Hargus 'Pig' Robbins

Country keyboard titan

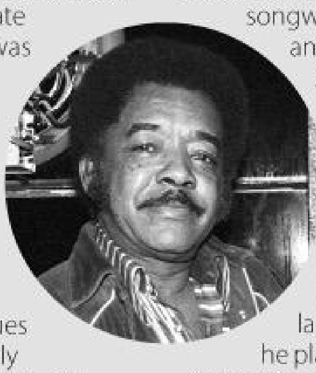
BORN 1938

Hargus Melvin Robbins learned to play piano while attending the Tennessee School For The Blind. An admirer of Tex Ritter able to play music by ear, he soon took the short walk to Music City's recording scene, his first major date being George Jones' bootlegger anthem White Lightning in 1959. One of the Nashville A-Team of session aces, the decades that followed saw him play for a dazzling array of country talent as the music evolved from its hillbilly beginnings, while his appearance on Dylan's *Blonde On Blonde* in 1966 ensured a wide array of engagements: few are the players whose credits ranged from Elvis Presley, Patsy Cline, Johnny Cash, Willie Nelson, Kenny Rogers and Dolly Parton to Ray Charles, Neil Young, JJ Cale, Bonnie 'Prince' Billy, Sturgill Simpson and Ween. He also recorded solo albums including 1978's *A Pig In A Poke* (his '59 song Save It, meanwhile, was covered by The Cramps in 1983), and was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2012. 'Pig', whose name provided a gag in Robert Altman's 1975 satire-masterpiece Nashville, was last heard on Connie Smith's 2021 LP *The Cry Of The Heart*.

Ian Harrison

THEY ALSO SERVED

BLUES man **JIMMY JOHNSON** (below, b.1928) was one of the last of the original generation of blues musicians that migrated to Chicago from the Mississippi cotton fields. A late starter at 28, he was mentored by **Otis Rush**, **Freddie King** and **Jimmy Dawkins**. After two decades as a sideman to a who's who of blues and soul, he finally stepped out in 1977 with his first LP. Still active at 93, he was doing weekly lockdown sessions on guitar and keyboards. His brother was blues and R&B singer **Syl Johnson**.



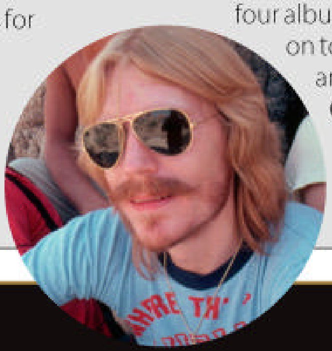
SONGWRITER **BEVERLY ROSS** (b.1934) met her co-writer **Julius Dixon** at the Brill Building. They went on to pen Dim, Dim The Lights (I Want Some Atmosphere) for **Bill Haley & His Comets** in 1954, while their 1957 collaboration Lollipop would become a pop standard. She later co-wrote The Girl Of My Best Friend (for **Elvis Presley**) and Candy Man (for **Roy Orbison**), before meeting **Phil Spector** in 1960. When Spector reused a riff of theirs for **Ben E. King**'s 1961 hit Spanish Harlem, her sense of betrayal was such she quit her career, later writing her memoir I Was The First Woman Phil Spector Killed.

BIRMINGHAM-born pianist **MICK FOWLER** (b.1948) joined psych-pop-blues band **Grapefruit**, formed under the auspices of the Apple label around songwriters John Perry and George Alexander (older sibling of George, Malcolm and Angus Young). Recruited after Grapefruit's Beatles-assisted launch had stalled, he played on '68 LP *Around Grapefruit* and 1969's *Deep Water*, later joining the proggier **Fynn McCool** on keyboards and lead vocals. Fowler later recorded jingles in the Bahamas, won an Emmy for his sound mixing for the CSI TV show and played Hawaiian music with his family.

INDIAN FILM SINGER **LATA MANGESHKAR** (b.1929), born **Hema Mangeshkar** in the central Indian state of Indore, was an international star of Indian cinema music, voicing many hundreds of films for which actors would lip-sync to her recorded vocal. With an impressive four-octave range, she was famed for her interpretive abilities, she recorded in many languages for composers including **RD Burman** and **AR Rahman**, and was older sister of **Asha Bhosle**, the equally beloved playback singer of Cornershop's Brimful Of Asha renown. The song also namechecks Lata.

VANCOUVER-born bassist **KERRY CHATER** (b.1945) played in **The Progressives** with members of **Iron Butterfly** before joining the California-based band that would become **Gary Puckett & The Union Gap** in 1966. The group had five US Top 10s – 1968's Young Girl was a UK Number 1 – and released four LPs before Chater left in 1970. He went on to write musicals and release two solo albums before finding success as a songwriter, his co-credits including US country Number 1s for **Alabama**, **George Strait** and **Reba McEntire**.

GUITARIST and singer **MIKE RABON** (b.1943) played in **The Buckaroos**, **The Mutineers** and then Oklahoma's British-invasion-influenced rockers the **Five Americans**, who found success in the US and Canada: in 1965 I See The Light was a Top 30 hit in both countries, while 1967's 45 Western Union went Top 5 (it also appeared in 2001 Tom Cruise movie Vanilla Sky). The group split in 1969 after recording four albums: Rabon went on to record solo and with **Choctaw** and **Gladstone**, later working in education.



BASSIST **GEORGE OBAN** (b. unknown) co-founded British reggae legends **Aswad** in 1975 and took his final bow on **Horace Andy**'s *Midnight Rockers* (see page 86). A staple of producer Adrian Sherwood's On-U Sound label, Oban appears on recordings by **New Age Steppers**, **Dub Syndicate** and **African Head Charge** and more. After he departed Aswad in 1979, Oban recorded a self-titled LP with **Motion**. His other credits include **Burning Spear**, **Janet Kay** and **The Red Crayola**.

DRUMMER **WILLIE LEACOX** (below, left, b.1947) worked as a session drummer in California before joining the live and studio band of soft rockers **America** in 1973. He first appeared on 1974's *Holiday*, the first of five of the band's LPs produced by **George Martin**. After the band's hit-packed '70s and successful early '80s, Leacox stayed on until 2014. He also played with **Silverado**, **Mickey Rooney Jr.** and **Iain Matthews**.

GALICIA-born **MIGUEL VICENS DANUS** (b.1943) played bass with Madrid group **Los Bravos**, whose debut single Black Is Black was a Top 5 hit in the US and Britain in summer 1966. After the band split in 1971, Danus took part in several reunions, and, buoyed by Quentin Tarantino using the group's 1968 45 Bring A Little Lovin' in his 2019 movie Once Upon A Time In… Hollywood, released a series of new Los Bravos songs in 2020 and 2021. Gigs were planned for this month.

ENTREPRENEUR **JAMAL EDWARDS** (b.1990) founded music platform SB.TV in 2006, focusing on videos for grime talents including **Dizzee Rascal** and **Wiley**. The online channel later gave early coverage to such musicians as **Ed Sheeran** and **Emeli Sandé**. Also a rapper (as **SmokeyBarz**), last year he began DJing as **Jamal Artman**. Active in philanthropic works in west London, he was awarded an MBE in 2015.

LOUISIANA rock'n'roller **KING LOUIE BANKSTON** (left, b.1973) played with meagrely-recorded cults **The Royal Pendletons** from 1991 until 1999. His other vehicles included **The Persuaders**, **Bad Times** (with Jay Reatard and Eric Oblivian), **The King Louis One-Man Band**, **The Missing Monuments**, **10-4 Backdoor** and **The Exploding Hearts**.

Ian Harrison, Jenny Bulley and Gianluca Tramontana

Courtesy of Nick Loss-Eaton, Gary Loverde, Getty (2)

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(A. Domino & D. Bartholomew)
FATS DOMINO
IM-853

Crescent City Roller: (clockwise from main) bejewelled Mr Antoine Dominique 'Fats' Domino Jr mans the 88s; cover version chancer Pat Boone; Ain't It A Shame, on wax.

APRIL 1955

...Fats Domino turns shame to triumph

APRIL 14 At first, Dave Bartholomew wasn't keen on Ain't That A Shame – or Ain't It A Shame, as it appeared on its original Imperial records label – as it seemed too simplistic. Nicknamed 'Leather Lungs' back when he was a jazz trumpeter in New Orleans, Bartholomew had been producing and arranging Louisiana pianist and singer Antoine 'Fats' Domino since his 1950 breakthrough, The Fat Man. That pounding single was a distorted back-and-forth rocker with a big bottom and rolling, bluesy keys. For all its driving beat, this new love-lost song was different, more delicate; more pop, even.

Maybe it was where they recorded it. Before, Fats' songs had invariably been cut at home in New Orleans, at Cosimo Matassa's J&M Recording Studio. A snug, direct-to-disc set-up, J&M was installed in the back of the family appliance store on Rampart Street on the edge of the French Quarter (famously, it later became a launderette). But on March 15, Fats had been gigging in Los Angeles at the 5-4 Ballroom, and his and Bartholomew's new co-write was recorded at Master Recorders in Hollywood. Those accompanying on the date included new sax player Herbert Hardesty, guitarist Walter 'Papoose' Nelson, drummer Cornelius Coleman and bassist Billy Diamond, who was credited for giving Fats his nickname.

According to archivists Bear Family, Ain't It A Shame marked the first time that engineer Abraham 'Bunny' Robyn persuaded Imperial's boss Lew Chudd that Fats' recordings sounded "logey" – or insufficiently lively – and sped up a song to make him sound younger. The soon-to-be-standard technique did the trick, and the track was positively bursting with teen appeal. "You got a big record, Fats," was Chudd's verdict.

Someone who agreed was Cleveland DJ Bill Randle, who played R&B and jazz on a show called The Interracial Goodwill Hour on Detroit radio. Having got an advance copy of Ain't It A Shame, he played it to Randy Wood of Dot Records, a label which exploited the commercial potential, in a still-segregated America, of "acceptable" white acts covering material by black artists. So it came to pass that Florida pop singer Pat Boone released a gritted-teeth, blanded-out version of Fats' song almost as soon as he did. A stickler for correct grammar, Boone allegedly argued that it should be retitled Isn't It A Shame.

"You might not think I sound black but back then people just didn't know R&B music," Boone later protested to Goldmine. "That's a good illustration of the function I and others served. We were making a whole other kind of music known to a blissfully ignorant majority of the public… we did serve a very useful function… for better or worse."

Fats admitted this gazumping hurt. But as recipient of writing as well as recording royalties, it could have been worse. Once, he brought Boone up on stage at a show, showed off a big gold ring and announced, "Pat Boone bought me this ring." He indicated something similar when reflecting on Ricky Nelson having a hit with I'm Walkin' before he did, in 1957. "It helped me," Fats told NME journalist Mick Farren in 1977. "When he sold all those records with one of my songs, I made a lot of money. Of course, it wasn't just the money, I got my music in front of a whole new audience."

While Boone's version was a US Number 1 for two weeks in July, Fats' original hit Number 10 on the pop charts the same month (it was

> "You got a big record, Fats."
> **LEW CHUDD, IMPERIAL RECORDS**

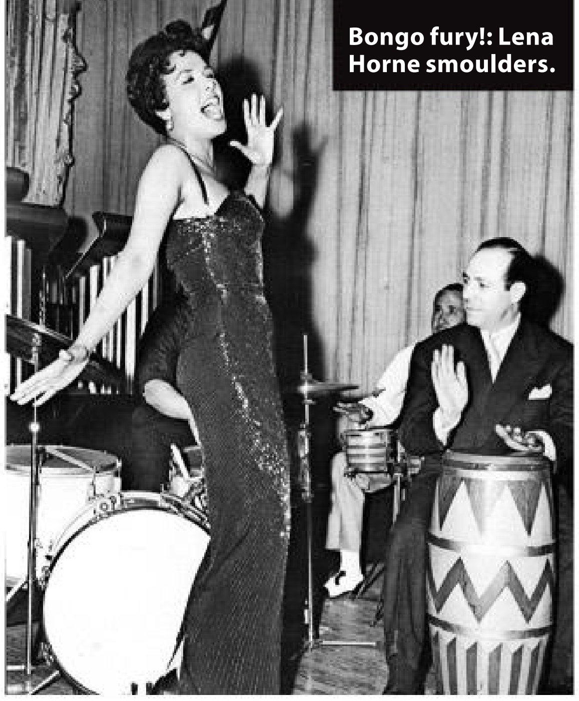
Getty (5), Alamy

also an R&B chart chart-topper for 11 weeks). With Bill Haley & His Comets' Rock Around The Clock also out of the gate, Fats' first crossover hit would soon be followed by Chuck Berry's Maybellene, then Little Richard's Tutti Frutti, also recorded at J&M in New Orleans, and then Elvis. The rock'n'roll era was truly underway, and Ain't That A Shame was one of its cornerstones.

Fats would score seven more R&B Number 1's and 36 more pop hits, including Top 10 Bartholomew co-writes Blue Monday, Whole Lotta Lovin' and Walking To New Orleans, and his definitive version of Blueberry Hill, before bowing out of the Top 40 in 1963. His last US chart entry was a 1968 cover of Lady Madonna by The Beatles, who'd written it with him in mind (both Paul McCartney and John Lennon would later cover Ain't That A Shame, the latter naming the song as the first he ever learned). Fats remained a strong live draw into the mid-'90s: thereafter, he kept a low profile close to home in New Orleans and cooked. When Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans in 2005, he had to be rescued by boat, and returned six weeks later to his looted home to find 'R.I.P. Fats' painted on his balcony. "I sure do appreciate that people think so much about me," he said.

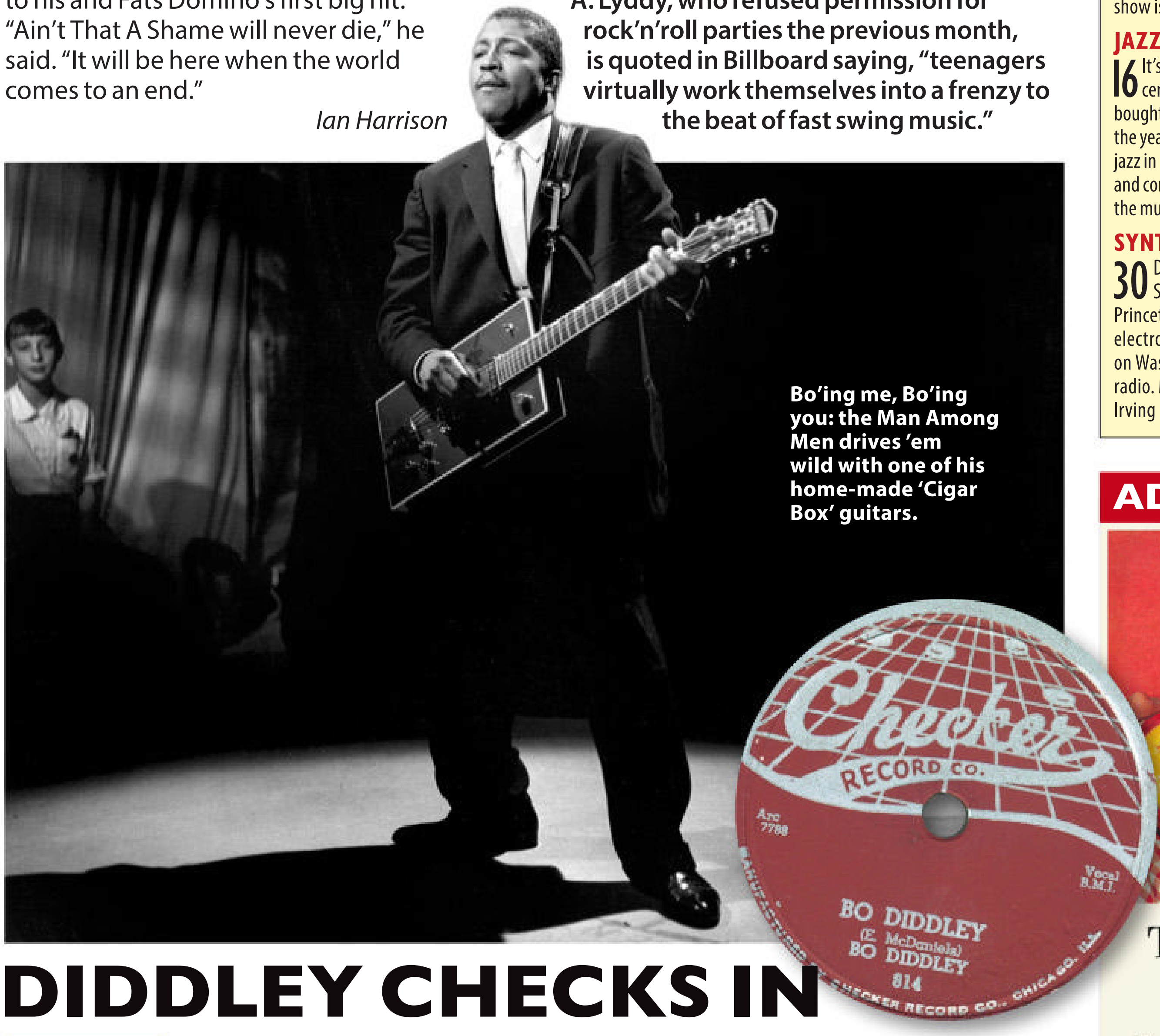
He left us in 2017. Dave Bartholomew reached 100 before checking out two years later, but not before having come round to his and Fats Domino's first big hit. "Ain't That A Shame will never die," he said. "It will be here when the world comes to an end."

Ian Harrison


Bongo fury!: Lena Horne smoulders.

Filth on the airwaves!!

APRIL 2 Lena Horne's mildly suggestive single I Love To Love is declared banned by the CBS network's radio and television shows for indecency. It comes at a time of heightened sensitivity to alleged musical naughtiness in American entertainment: radio stations in Boston, Chicago and the South claim to have received thousands of letters from teenagers objecting to the lustful connotations of songs including Sinatra's From The Bottom To The Top, Sarah Vaughn's Make Yourself Comfortable and Dinah Washington's Teach Me Tonight. New England police superintendent John A. Lyddy, who refused permission for rock'n'roll parties the previous month, is quoted in Billboard saying, "teenagers virtually work themselves into a frenzy to the beat of fast swing music."


Bo'ing me, Bo'ing you: the Man Among Men drives 'em wild with one of his home-made 'Cigar Box' guitars.

DIDDLEY CHECKS IN

APRIL 2 Bo Diddley's debut single Bo Diddley/I'm A Man is released on the Checker label. Recorded in Chicago the previous month with Otis Spann on piano, the eponymous song's fascinating "hambone" maraca-rhythms, distorted guitars and gnomic lyrics inspires delight and incomprehension; the single soon picks up airtime across America and hits the R&B charts. A true original of rock'n'roll, the decision for Ellas Bates to become Bo Diddley is reputedly taken by co-producer and label proprietor Leonard Chess: Chess also insists the original's risqué lyrics are cleaned up. Cash-in versions of Bo's theme song, of various levels of ghastliness, inevitably follow from Joe Reisman's Orchestra And Chorus, Jean Dinning and Jerry Murad's Harmonicats.

ALSO ON!

OZ, I LOVE YOU

6 **Spike Jones** (above) **& His City Slickers** finish an Australian tour at the Sydney Stadium. "No words can adequately describe the scenes of madness crossed with musical genius," gushes the Kings Cross Advertiser. Also gigging in Oz this month is piano star Winifred Atwell, who will later retire there.

FREED IS GOOD

8 DJ **Alan Freed**'s Rock'N'Roll Easter Jubilee Show opens at the Brooklyn-Paramount Theatre. Acts include **LaVern Baker**, **The Moonglows**, **The Penguins**, **The Three Chuckles** and **Eddie Fontaine**.

TA-RA-RA-BOOM-DE-RAY

14 **Johnnie Ray**'s If You Believe enters the UK charts at 14. The notoriously emotional singer, dubbed 'The Prince Of Wails', tours Britain this month: among the fans queuing for an autograph at his London show is Andrew Loog Oldham.

JAZZ-YOU-LIKE IT

16 It's reported that 55 per cent more jazz LPs were bought last year in the US than the year before. The spread of jazz in clubs, college venues and concert halls also indicates the music is booming.

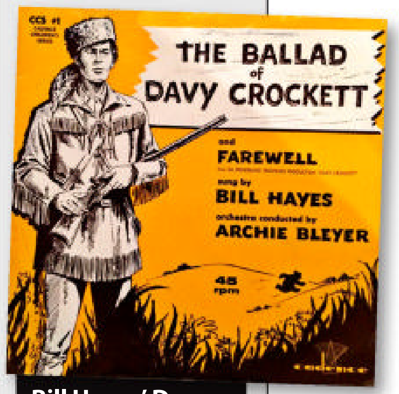
SYNTH-IA WILD

30 Developed at the David Sarnoff Laboratories in Princeton, NJ, the RCA Mark I electronic synthesizer debuts on Washington's WGMS radio. Music by Brahms and Irving Berlin is broadcast.

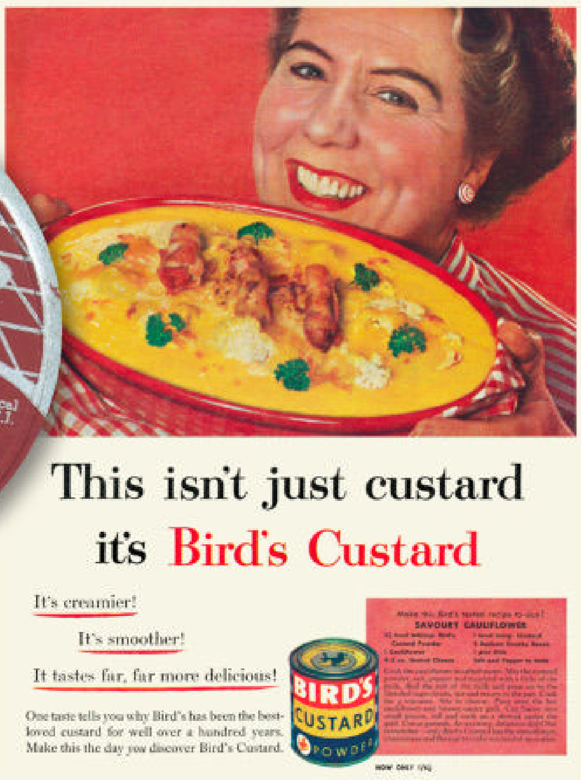
TOP TEN

US JUKEBOX HITS APRIL 16

1 **THE BALLAD OF DAVY CROCKETT** BILL HAYES CADENCE
2 **THE CRAZY OTTO** JOHNNY MADDOX & THE RHYTHMASTERS DOT
3 **SINCERELY** THE McGUIRE SISTERS CORAL
4 **DANCE WITH ME HENRY** GEORGIA GIBBS MERCURY
5 **TWEEDLE DEE** GEORGIA GIBBS MERCURY
6 **MELODY OF LOVE** BILLY VAUGHN AND HIS ORCHESTRA DOT
7 **HOW IMPORTANT CAN IT BE?** JONI JAMES MGM
8 **MELODY OF LOVE** FOUR ACES FT. AL ALBERTS DECCA
9 **KO KO MO** THE CREW-CUTS MERCURY
10 **CHERRY PINK AND APPLE BLOSSOM WHITE** PÉREZ 'PREZ' PRADO AND HIS ORCHESTRA RCA VICTOR


CCS #1
THE BALLAD of DAVY CROCKETT
and FAREWELL
sung by BILL HAYES
orchestra conducted by ARCHIE BLEYER
45 rpm
Bill Hayes' Davy Crockett rockets to the top!

AD ARCHIVE 1955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SAVOURY CAULIFLOWER
BIRD'S
CUSTARD
POWDER

Chomp! Sloo! Hope it's savoury cauliflower with Bird's Custard, mustard and bacon for tea, mum (proof that food had more flavour in those days).

Who spoofed who?

Throw back the veil of rock-related ignorance, as nagging queries are resolved.

Re: Dave Goodman's bogus 1985 Sex Pistols record, by 'The Ex Pistols' (Time Machine, MOJO 340). I have to admit I fell for this one too, for longer than I'd like to admit. What are the other musical forgeries people believed?

Simon Holder, via e-mail

MOJO says: Like computer-generated post-modernist blather and the BBC's famous 'spaghetti harvest' prank of 1957, someone has to take it seriously for it to really count. Leaving the unfortunate likes of Milli Vanilli aside, one ripe example was on April Fools' Day 2004, when it was announced that the new theme to venerable Radio 4 soap The Archers was an electronic "urban" re-arrangement by Brian Eno; also on the BBC, in 1961, Mobile For Tape And Percussion was presented as a serious work by the Polish modernist composer Piotr Zak (it was actually a load of random drumming by classical musicologist and Pink Floyd interviewer Hans Keller and composer Susan Bradshaw). In 2006, cultural commentator Waldemar Januszczak admiringly wrote about lost Berlin noiserockers Lustfaust, who had in fact been devised by conceptual artist Jamie Shovlin, and later appeared on a split 7-inch with Schneider TM (other fabricated groups who may have been believed for five seconds include psychedelic XTC side-project The Dukes Of Stratosphear and Dave Stewart's Jagger, Elton and Ringo-endorsed Platinum Weird). The wish to believe also plays a part – see the 1969 LP by The Masked Marauders. Supposedly a Beatles/Stones/Dylan team-up, it was devised by Greil Marcus in a gag review for Rolling Stone. Quickly recorded by Berkeley's Cleanliness And Godliness Skiffle Band, the LP not only charted in the US but got the Rhino reissue treatment in 2001. And we must take our hat off to George Harrison, who shortly before his passing sent Phil Collins a tape of what purported to be his unused teenage conga contributions to *All Things Must Pass*. "I thought, Oh my god, this sounds terrible," Phil told Entertainment Weekly. Yet the offending percussion, it was revealed, was actually top session man Ray Cooper coached by George to play deliberately badly. Said Collins, "I couldn't believe that a Beatle had actually spent that much time on a practical joke for me." As ever, tell us your favourite musical hoaxes, please!

WEIRD BILLS (RETURN)

I once saw Mud support Captain Beefheart in Stevenage. Both were surprisingly excellent on the night!

Dave Shaw, Enfield

In Indianapolis in September 1972. Opening was a prog band from Fort Wayne, Indiana, called Ethos. Next up was the country-rock with Christian underpinnings of Mason Proffit. And the headliners (the band that I had come to hear) were the greasy 1950s revivalists, Sha Na Na. Something of a roller-coaster for the ears.

Jym Mooney, Milwaukee

MOJO says: It's the Ask MOJO poser that will not die! And thanks to Linzeh from Toronto for the memories of Joe Jackson awkwardly supporting The Who in 1982, when his white suit and a "loaded hot dog" messily collided.

WHAT BOOTS DID VIRGIN SELL?

Richard Branson and the late Nik Powell both said you could buy bootlegs and smoke dope in the first Virgin record shops. But which bootlegs did they sell? And when did they stop?

Keith Greenwood, via e-mail

MOJO says: Richard Branson, whose Irish wolfhound was called Bootleg, admitted "a furtive trade in live bootleg recordings" in his 1998 memoir Losing My Virginity. These included Jimi Hendrix's *Live At The Los Angeles Forum 4-25-70* and *Live At The Isle Of Wight*, Led Zeppelin's *Live On Blueberry Hill*, Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young's *Wooden Nickel*, Bob Dylan's *Great White Wonder*, Pink Floyd's *Embryo* (mistitled 'Embrwo' on the sleeve), The Rolling Stones' *Beautiful Delilah* and *H-Bomb* by Deep Purple. The latter was the cause of legal action in January 1972: after a raid, a court judgment and a fine, Virgin bowed out of selling LPs on such august labels as Rubber Dubber and Trade Mark Of Quality. Anyone still got theirs?

H BOMB
DEEP PURPLE

He started a hoax (clockwise from top left): Brian Eno, trifler with the Ambridge army's affections; the law eyes the stoned bootleg-buying freaks at Virgin's Notting Hill Gate shop; Deep Purple's offending release; gob-iron-playing rapper Doug E. Fresh.

RAP MOUTH ORGANS, ANYONE?

I was recently enjoying Non Stop by Young MC, which samples The Wizard by Black Sabbath. But has anyone ever played live harmonica in hip-hop?

David Wright, via e-mail

MOJO says: We can think of other examples of sampled harmonica – The Geto Boys' Life In The Fast Lane, or Trilogy Of Terror by Kool G Rap & DJ Polo, which uses a sample of Area Code 615's Stone Fox Chase (AKA the OGWT theme). But live? Step forward rap veteran Doug E. Fresh, who's mixed beatboxing and harmonica playing in his live performances.

...AND NOW, THE POTTIEST SEGUES

I've been enjoying the incongruous bill discussion. In a similar fashion, a few years ago I went to a junior school summer fete one sunny afternoon and while people ate hot dogs and kids had their faces painted, a DJ came on and opened his set with… Public Image by PiL. Anybody beat that for pure unexpectedness?

Mark Frost, via e-mail

MOJO says: It's like when Prince Philip died and Radio 1 Xtra confused the ravers by going abruptly from pumping-in-your-face house music into the National Anthem. Hit us, readers!

CONTACT MOJO

Have you got a challenging musical question for the MOJO Brains Trust? E-mail **askmojo@bauermedia.co.uk** and we'll help untangle your trickiest puzzles.

Getty (2)

Dub And Bass With My Headphones, Man

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Worth £329 a set, we have two to give away! Winners will also receive vinyl copies of Trojan Jamaica releases *Got To Be Tough* by Toots & The Maytals, *Solid Gold U-Roy* and the various artists collection *Red Gold Green & Blue*. So complete crypto-twister Michael Jones' crossword and send a scan of it to mojo@bauermedia.co.uk, making sure to type CROSSWORD 342 in the subject line. Entries without that subject line will not be considered. Please include your home address, e-mail and phone number. The closing date for entries is **May 2**. For the rules of the quiz, see www.mojo4music.com

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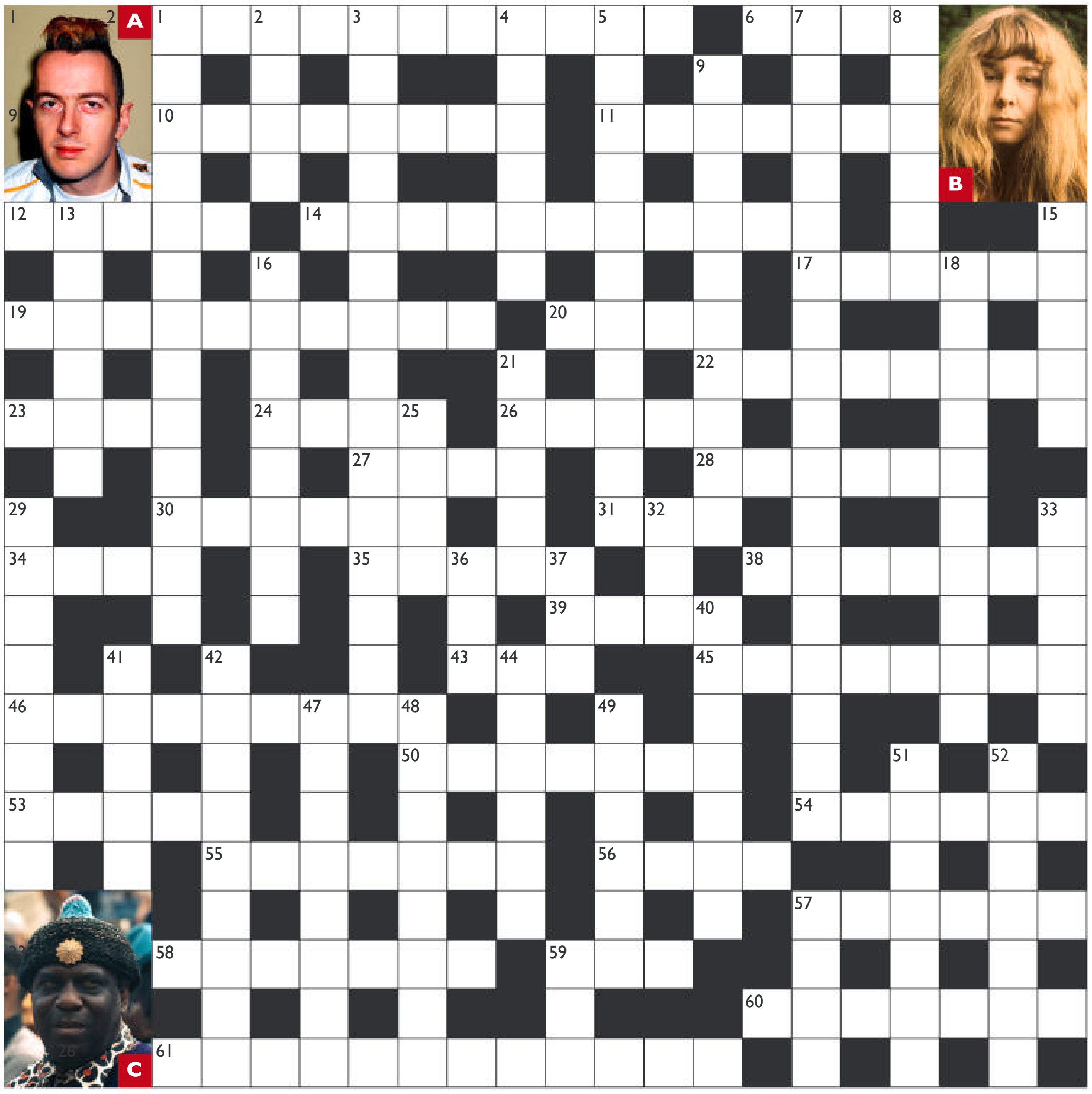
ANSWERS

MOJO 340

Across: 1 Ian Curtis, 5 Zang, 8 ABC, 10 Tubular Bells, 13 Metal, 15 Delta Blues, 18 Saturday, 19 Sparks, 21 The Devil, 22 Khan, 23 Slave, 24 I Do, 25 Avett, 26 Bonehead, 28 Geno, 31 Far, 33 Lisa, 34 Ritual, 35 Pegg, 36 Noise, 37 Atomic, 38 Litt, 40 Inner, 41 Lloyd, 42 Journal, 43 Enemy, 47 Connection, 49 Beasts, 52 Anna, 55 Tim, 56 Pride, 57 Make A New Plan, 58 Seb, 60 REO, 62 Nas, 63 Vern, 64 Elmer, 65 Greg, 66 Slayer.

Down: 1 In The Land Of Grey And Pink, 2 Nebraska, 3 Roadrunner, 4 Sue, 6 Absolute Beginners, 7 Garbage, 9 Chelsea Hotel, 11 Budd, 12 Lady D'Arbanville, 14 La's, 16 Eliza Carthy, 17 Ash, 20 Pain, 23 St Vincent, 27 No Regrets, 29 Eyes, 30 Cream, 32 Crocodiles, 39 Clock, 44 Mantaray, 45 Eclipse, 46 Jam, 48 Number, 49 BB King, 50 Apache, 51 Teeth, 53 Nine, 54 Spell, 59 Eve, 61 Oar.

Winner: Kenneth Hope of **Kettering** wins a pair of Esprit Titus EZ speakers from Triangle.



Getty (3)

ACROSS

1 See photoclue A (3,8)
6 An instruction from the Eric Burdon Band, or one of three from The Hollies (4)
10 New Order single originally written as a Joy Division song (8)
11 Polly's come from the city and the sea (7)
12 ----- *And Last And Always* (Sisters Of Mercy album) (5)
14 Their 2021 album was *New Long Leg* (3,8)
17 Up-and-down song from A Saucerful Of Secrets (3-3)
19 Road on which they kiss in France, according to Joni Mitchell (4,6)
20 Rain, Diamond or Austerity? (4)
22 Carter, blues star who had a hit with Patches (8)
23 Kiss's Eric or the Boo Radleys' Martin (4)
24 Tangerine Dream album after *Zeit* (4)
26 Oscar Peterson's instrument (5)
27 His bandmates are Fletcher & Gahan (4)
28 A buzz around U2's second chart-topping 45? (3,3)
30 Muddy's chosen element? (6)
31 Lambert who co-managed and produced The Who (3)
34 ---- *In Exile* (James Dean Bradfield LP) (4)
35 Photographer Russell who took the images for 52 Down (5)
38 "In a garden in the house of love" (The House Of Love) (5,2)
39 *The Pious Bird Of Good* ---- (Fleetwood Mac compilation) (4)
43 Philip Glass's Symphony No. 1 (3)
45 Queen song on which Steve Howe plays Spanish guitar (8)
46 Trip-hop classic that opens with Safe From Harm (4,5)
50 In a Cher song, it's the last of what the people of the town call us (7)
53 Toni Halliday and Dean Garcia's band (5)
54 Paul, who has *Cult Leader Tactics* (6)
55 Specials' double A-side with Rude Buoys Outa Jail (3,4)
56 Gold ---- (Yeah Yeah Yeahs) (4)
57 Drummer who was born Peter Clarke (6)
58 It happened on 13 July 1985 (4,3)
59 Plastic --- Band (3)
60 The Cure's only Top 5 hit (7)
61 Founder of Tamla Records (5,5,2)

DOWN

1 Composer of Nico's These Days (7,6)
2 Bob's tail-feather-shaking and monkey-shining partner (4)
3 Talk Talk producer and songwriting partner of Mark Hollis (3,6-6)
4 John, leader of the Blues Breakers (6)
5 AKA Sandy Hurvitz, who released *Primordial Lovers* (5,6)
7 Bob Dylan's Oscar-winning song (6,4,6)
8 John, the designer of the Rolling Stones' tongue logo (6)
9 M person who recorded *Woman From The Warm Grass* (5,5)
13 The Spencer Davis Group's excuse for having a very messy pad (2,1,3)
15 It describes Jethro Tull's dream (5)
16 Record label at which Jerry Wexler was a key figure in the 1950s to 1970s (8)
18 See photoclue B (5,5)
21 The Threepenny -----, from which came Mack The Knife (5)
25 ---- High, Grammy-winner for Page & Plant (4)
29 Guitarist who took over from Eric Clapton in the Yardbirds (4,4)
32 *Black* --- (AC/DC album) (3)
33 The Brian Jonestown Massacre's Newcombe (5)
36 Lyricist David who worked closely with Burt Bacharach (3)
37 Compilation that numbers 110 – at the time of writing? (3)
40 John Lennon produced his *Pussy Cats* (7)
41 See photoclue C (3,2)
42 Viv from The Slits (9)
44 Jazz cornetist, mentor of Louis Armstrong and bandleading King (6)
47 Foo Fighters song from 2000 or 2023 (4,4)
48 Been Caught -------- (Jane's Addiction) (8)
49 "When the samba takes you…" (Roxy Music) (6)
51 Sixties psychedelic rock band whose singer/guitarist was Peter Sando (7)
52 The album that ends: "I hope we've passed the audition" (3,2,2)
57 Coxon & Rowntree & James & Albarn (4)
59 Like Neil Young's not-so-young ways (3)

This ain't jazz?: early Mahavishnu Orchestra in full flight (from left) Jerry Goodman, John McLaughlin, Billy Cobham, Rick Laird and Jan Hammer.

John McLaughlin and the Mahavishnu Orchestra

Fusion began when Miles said the time was right. It ended when a wall of silence proved unsurpassable.

HELLO EARLY 1971

It was October 1970. I was playing with Miles [Davis] in this club called Lennie's On The Turnpike, right near Boston. I'd had a really rotten night, I just played like a dog. And when I was busy apologising to Miles, out of the blue he says, "It's time to form your own band." And I took it very seriously because I trusted him implicitly.

I'd run into [drummer] Billy Cobham on the *Jack Johnson* recording [1971 Miles LP], and we became very tight. He was the first person I called. A month later, I got a call from Miroslav Vitouš, he said, "I'm putting a band together with Joe Zawinul and Wayne Shorter and it's going to be called Weather Report, and we'd like you in it." I said, "Sounds fantastic, but Miles has given me the word…" He understood, and said, "I have a friend who's from Prague, Jan Hammer, he's a great piano player, he's out in California right now with Sarah Vaughn." "He's playing with Sarah Vaughn?!" I talked to Jan, I said, "You know, we're moving out of that classical format here. And he said, "I need to break out also." Then Jerry Goodman came – I didn't want a jazz violinist, I wanted a rhythm blues or blues player really – and Rick [Laird, bass].

Billy and I had started going through the tunes at SIR studios in Midtown, so by the time Rick, Jerry and Jan came in, they had this rock-solid kind of tightness between the drums and the guitar to lean on, you know? I think that really helped them feel a way into it. We were very strong together. It just felt very right, from the very beginning.

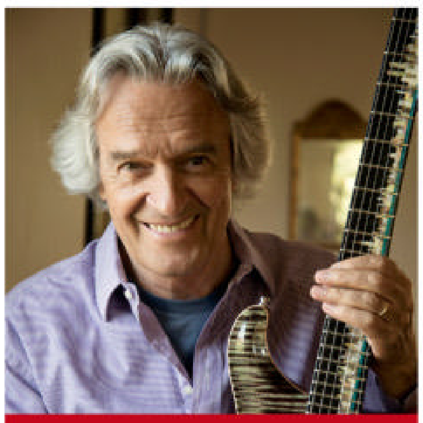
We had instant success, opening for John Lee Hooker at the Whiskey in Greenwich Village. People were gobsmacked. I don't know what John Lee Hooker thought of us, maybe he thought we were just crazy. He wouldn't have been the only one. We got flak from jazz musicians, saying, "This ain't jazz!" But you know, what's jazz? As Miles said, "It's a white man's word." I kind of like that. And anyway, I didn't care, because I really believed in the music.

Getty (2), Beat Pfaendler

GOODBYE JANUARY 1974

We'd had this great success, with lots of money and girls and you know, drugs, if you're interested. But I was very much involved in my spiritual discipline – for me, after a concert, I'd go back to my hotel, order a salad, meditate, go to sleep, you know. I didn't hang out, get high and blah-blah-blah. In that sense, it could have been interpreted as anti-social behaviour, not intentionally.

There was the point where I was hanging out with Carlos Santana, and we had the kind of dialogue that I didn't really enjoy with the other guys. We did [1973 LP] *Love Devotion Surrender*, a real labour of love, and went on tour, with Billy. At the end of the tour we were going to rejoin Mahavishnu Orchestra to continue on to Japan. And something happened. When we got on the plane, Jerry and Jan wouldn't even say hello to me. By the second night, I said in the band-room, "If you think I'm the worst asshole in the world, fine, spit it out, I'll fix it." But until the end of the Japanese tour, not one word from them. The really weird thing is that they were playing their hearts out, giving 100 per cent musically, but off-stage, stony silence.



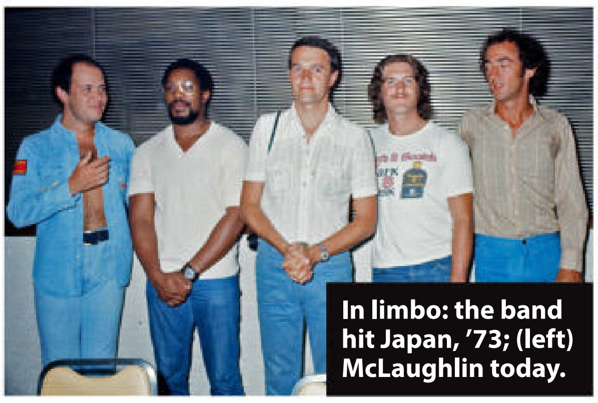
"I don't know what John Lee Hooker thought of us."
JOHN McLAUGHLIN

At the end of the tour, I said, "If you're not going to speak to me, I'm not gonna play with you, because this is silly, this is in the silly zone." They continued, so I said, "OK, we've got about five, six months of concerts, then that's it." And that's exactly how it happened. Until the very end, not one word.

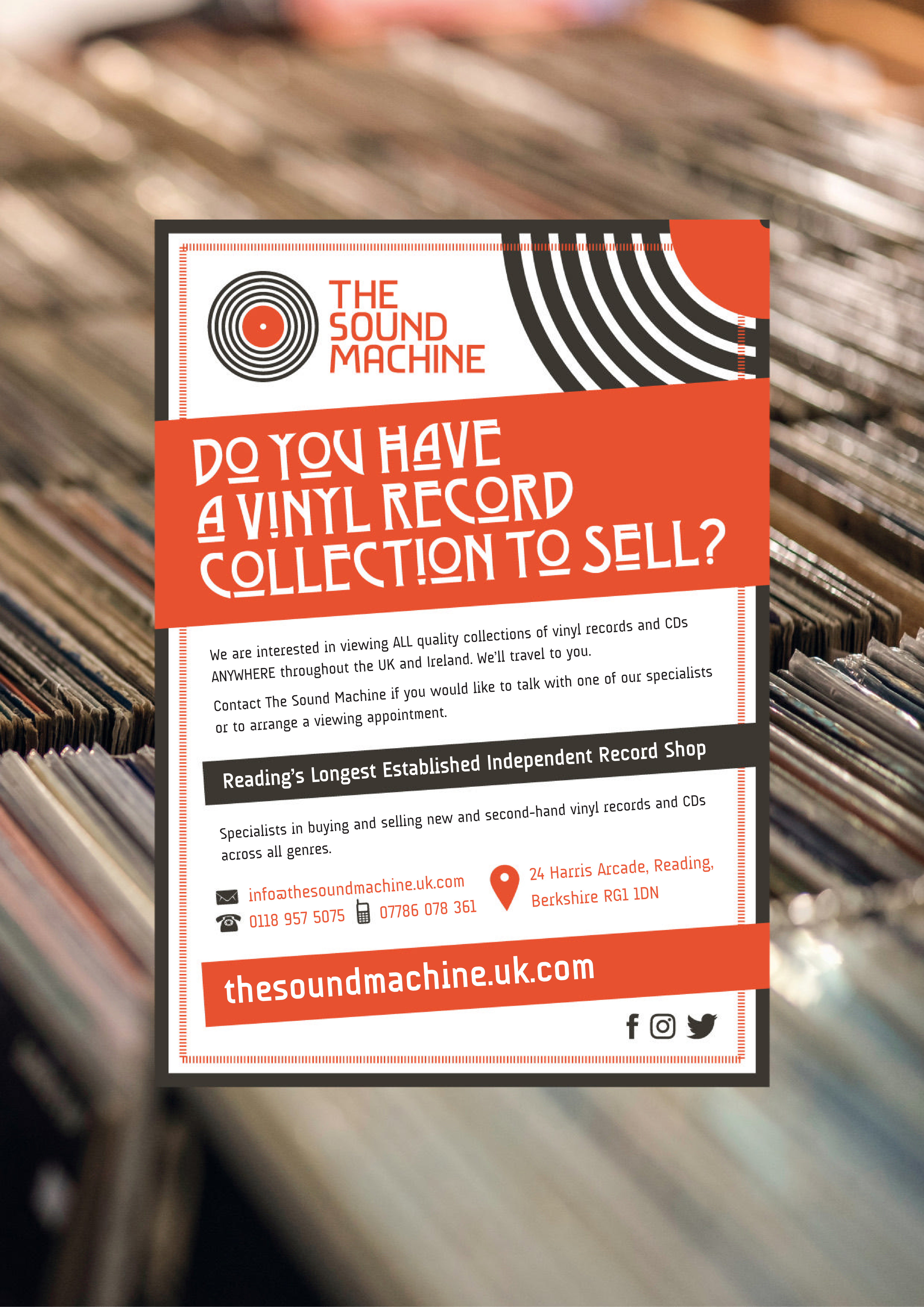
To arrive at such an acrimonious situation was baffling to me, and just really sad, because I really loved these guys. It ended with a whimper, not with a bang. We could have done a final tour and then said goodbye, with a good feeling. I tried that later, but I couldn't get Jan to agree. That's why I use this word 'limbo', because the story of this band is like a long fade-out. I gave it a tremendous amount of thought – why? And the only reason I can come up with is human nature, you know, and that I was into my trip – I mean, I'm still into it – which may have been misinterpreted. But, you know, such is life.

As told to Ian Harrison

John McLaughlin: The Montreux Years is out now on BMG. He plays London Barbican (May 28), Manchester Bridgewater Hall (30) and Edinburgh Usher Hall (31).



In limbo: the band hit Japan, '73; (left) McLaughlin today.



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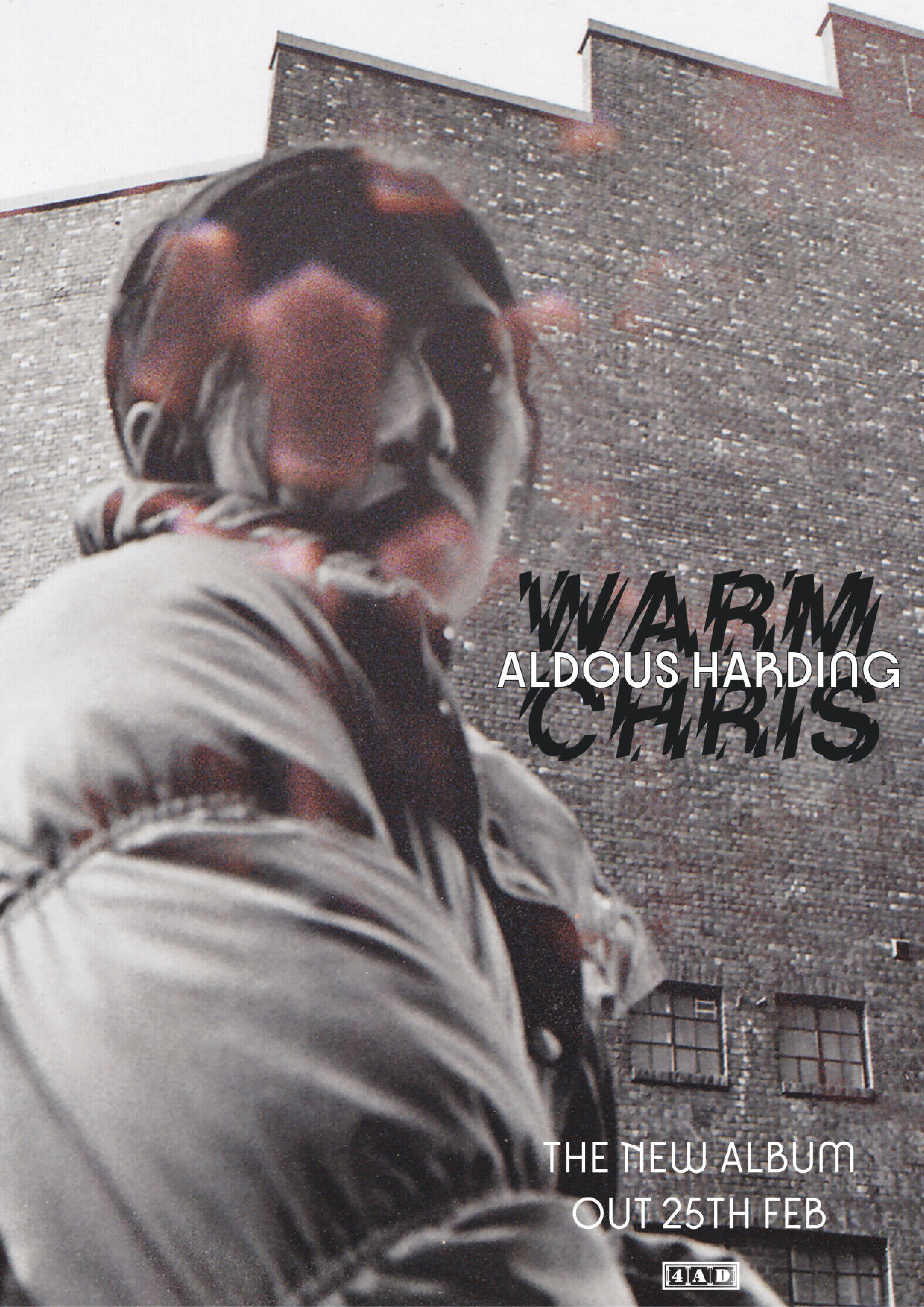
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